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RECOLLECTIONS OF A LITERARY LIFE.



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LITERARY LIFE

BY

MAXIME DU CAMP

*Member of the French Academy*

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE "REVUE DE PARIS."

To find myself again in the society of Louis de Cormenin was a compensation for the regret I felt at having come to the end of my travels.

He had gone to live in Venice in 1850 with Théophile Gautier during part of the time I had spent galloping over Syria and Phœnicia. They were both men of gentle, careless, dreamy mould, lovers of art, able to lose themselves in the contemplation of a strip of blue sky seen through the arched openings of a campanile, or to find their amusement in watching the pigeons of Saint Mark pick up grains of Indian corn upon the Square. Happiness for them was attainable among the pearly effects of Venetian scenes, before the warm-toned Titians and the spiritualized Virgins of John Bellini. They did not need very material delights, were satisfied with *frutti di mare* at a fishermen's inn, drank water from outdoor fountains, floated upon the Lido, where they could,

"Dormir la tête à l'ombre et les pieds au soleil,"

wandered out into the night to watch the stars reflected in the Lagoon as they stood upon the Schiavoni, and slept through the morning hours after being out till daybreak. Their natures were alike in simplicity and in a certain singularity; they seemed formed for one another.

Gautier's account of their journey to Italy is a *chef-d'œuvre*. Who does not know his "Italia?" For four months they lived together free and happy.

Louis no longer heard the daily lectures of his father and mother who wanted him to marry, and Théophile could hear a knock at his door without imagining it was a creditor come to dun him. Gautier says in a letter I received in Athens, on the 13th December, 1850, "Louis looks like his own shadow upon the wall, he is so bored here, and if we had not had the four months in Italy we should have gone mad like dogs or had the spleen like the English."

When I joined them they had not regained their courage, and did not even attempt to struggle against the current of depression and of discouragement which was bearing them under. Louis was disturbed by politics, which grew daily more confusing, and poor Gautier, poor Théo, as he preferred to be called, declared that "the Fates had run only dark threads into the sombre texture of his existence." He had left his little house in the Rue Lord Byron and had retired to a fifth storey in the Rue Rougemont, where his creditors gave him but little peace. His family drew upon the slender resources which were entirely the result of his exertions and hardly sufficed for his own wants apart from the exactions to which he was subjected. It is true that he complained of Fate, but his protest was a lamentation, never an invective. Never even in his hours of greatest suffering, and they were many, did I detect in him a symptom of envy. He envied others neither their wealth, nor their power, nor even their happiness. Yet, surely, the author of "Fortunio" would have known how to dispose of the wealth of a millionaire? As soon as I had settled my affairs in Paris I went to see Flaubert, who was once more living at Croisset. He had not been able to return to work, and found reading even a difficulty. His mind was far away, but where was it? Perhaps upon the Nile, or in the defiles of the Lebanon, or haunting the cemetery of Scutari under the cypress trees. He said to me, "Do you remember?" and spoke of many things, of the reis of our Nile boat, of the dragomans, the bazaars of Damascus, our cruise upon the Dead Sea,

of the great Ionic capital we had sat on amid the ruins of Sardis. Sometimes he exclaimed, "Sheik Moham-med an' Nabi," and imitated the sound of the oars as they dropped into the water with tears in his eyes. When we were in the East he was homesick for Normandy, and when in Normandy he longed for the East. Poor genius! His imagination desired and regretted, and would not allow him to enjoy the present.

I remarked to him, "But when we were travelling you were often bored." "Yes!" he replied, "but I should like to begin it all over again." That was his state always, haunted by the past, attracted by the future, and never able to accept the present.

Bouilhet listened with an inscrutable expression to these lamentations, and did not utter a word, but I well knew what was passing through his mind. The life Flaubert found so intolerable, and as he put it, "unjust and aggressive," would have seemed comfort and ease to him. An independent position, which ensures the means of livelihood, allows a man to do the work he prefers, and relieves the mind of all care for the morrow, is it nothing to be thankful for? "What would he think," said Bouilhet to me afterwards, "of having to earn the money for his dinner and his lodging?" His own mode of life had not changed since our departure, and he did not find it a pleasant one, as I could well understand. The lessons he gave were his only resource, and though he bowed to necessity he loathed his vocation. For a poet with rhymes running in his head it is hard to be explaining Virgil to boys whose thoughts are elsewhere, to spend his time correcting Latin verses botched by the same boys, and to be restricted to the conventional French of books of extracts intended for recitation. He had to coach dull brains for the Baccalaureat examinations, and listen to the reproaches of parents when their hopefuls did not gain diplomas. From morning to night he was at work. How often did I not see him when we were dining together pause

motionless and indifferent to his surroundings, his eye fixed, and his lips parted, absorbed in thought? Then, suddenly, with a smile, he would rouse himself, and come back to consciousness of our presence. The rhyme he had been seeking was found. In our absence he had finished his poem "Melænis," which had meant three years of toil. He was well pleased with it, and rightly so, for it is work of the first order. The poem was finished, but how was its author to live? Was he to be forced to give lessons for the rest of his life? Plato expelled the poet from his ideal Republic; less barbarous but more cruel modern society allows him to die. Alfred de Vigny tells his story in "Stello." He dies of want under every form of government. It is impossible for the poet—I mean he who is simply a poet, and does not write for the stage—to live by the produce of his brain. With rare exceptions he cannot earn his daily bread.

A poet without place or pension and without fortune, who can only write odes, must inevitably die of hunger. There is no room for him in our world. He represents one thing, however. What is it? Less than nothing, the soul!

His anxieties saddened Bouilhet. In our intimate talks we would discuss and turn over what was for him a terrible dilemma, whether to give up his lessons or to give up his dinner, and it was borne in upon him that he had best try dramatic authorship, and like many another seek to live by the stage. In spite of his classical training Bouilhet cared only for the romantic school. He eschewed what is called the "common sense" school, and regretted not having been able to throw in his lot with the sacred band who had borne the brunt of the struggle over the production of "Hermani." This man, of amiable disposition and of refined literary taste, had no fancy for any but exciting situations and sensational *dénouements* upon the stage. He was naturally attracted by the drama in verse, and yet he hesitated con-

tinually. It seemed to him that to create a continuous plot, with incidents logically evolved, to keep the different characters in movement, to adhere to the prescribed form, and yet not to forsake truth, was a task above his powers. In order to overcome these difficulties, and get his hand in, to familiarize himself with a class of ideas and impressions hitherto unknown to him, he set to work, assisted by Flaubert, to compose, or rather manufacture, *scénarios* of every description. Nothing seemed to come amiss to them, nor to fail in affording them some form of training in an art towards which they were not naturally disposed; tragedy, comedy, burlesque, melodrama, opera, pantomime, fairy pieces, every branch was attempted in turn. They thus wasted many hours which might have been more serviceably employed upon work better suited to their powers. But it was work which fascinated Bouilhet and charmed Flaubert, who imagined he had a vocation for play-writing, and believed that he had achieved a success when the "Candidat" was put upon the stage.

Bouilhet, whilst awaiting the future reserved for these attempts, looked at his finished poem, and asked himself the agonizing question familiar to all beginners, "How shall I get it published?" However, the appearance of "*Melænis*" was hastened by a circumstance none of us had foreseen, and its author was suddenly launched upon the world of letters.

One evening in the middle of August Louis de Cormenin came to see me, and related a conversation he had had with Théophile Gautier and Arsène Houssaye. Their idea was to revive the *Revue de Paris*, which formerly had had some success. Originally founded by Véron, it had been transferred by him to Bonnaire, led a chequered existence, and had finally disappeared. Arsène Houssaye had bought the review, and amalgamated it with *l'Artiste*, which he already edited. I at once accepted the literary partnership. Louis proposed that I should put



myself in communication with Arsène Houssaye, and it was agreed between us that he, Louis de Cormenin, Théophile Gautier, and I should, under certain conditions, become joint proprietors of the review. The new *Revue de Paris* was to appear monthly. We were to form ourselves into a committee to criticize, accept, or reject the contributions submitted to us, and each number was to be signed by us all as joint editors responsible for the contents. The first number was to appear on the 1st October, 1851. We shook hands upon it, and the affair was arranged.

Writers may be divided into two classes, those for whom literature is a means to an end, and those for whom it is in itself the end. I belonged then, as I have always belonged, to the second category. I have made no demand upon literature, except the right of loving it and of cultivating it to the best of my powers. Therefore I made the proviso that no political question should be dealt with in the pages of the *Revue*. The area of purely literary subjects was wide enough to provide us with plenty of solid food. Further, as I did not wish to use the review for an advertisement, I insisted that on no excuse whatever were we to be mentioned in our publication.

This clause of the agreement was respected, and our names never appeared in the *Revue de Paris* except to sign our own articles.

Our system was open to criticism. A committee, however excellent the intentions of each individual member of it, is apt to be susceptible to outside influence. The spirit of *camaraderie* creeps in, and that means the admission of indifferent or mediocre work. A review should be edited by one man, who cares for literature, but who is not himself a writer. Because we had not realized that truth, and for other reasons also, we were taught some severe lessons.

We were not unduly ambitious, nor did we seek to supplant similar periodicals which were already

known and in repute. We merely hoped to find scope for our venture, and we thought our efforts were worthy of encouragement. Just as the Odéon Theatre holds its own side by side with the Comédie-Française, we believed that the *Revue de Paris* might co-exist in friendly rivalry with the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. We looked upon our enterprise as a sort of literary outpost, and we always wished those travellers of the pen God-speed who, after finding shelter in our hostelry, left us to go on their way. Between the starting-point and the goal there are many resting-places; ours was one of these, and we tried to give it as friendly an air as was feasible.

Our partnership was short-lived. Arsène Houssaye was the first to retire, after having transferred the copyright to the rest. Then Théophile Gautier left us, and finally Louis de Cormenin, whose loss was a source of pain to me.

Laurent-Pichat had taken the place of Arsène Houssaye and Théophile Gautier, and acquired half proprietorship of the review. He and I struggled on to the end through good and evil fortune, and did our best to welcome those who sought access to our pages. The *Revue de Paris* was fated to die a violent death. The reverberation caused by Orsini's bombs swept it away in January, 1858, and it succumbed to an abuse of power I shall describe later on.

Financially the undertaking was not a brilliant one. From a literary standpoint the review had its uses, even if it never became a very important organ. If only because it was instrumental in establishing the reputation of such men as Louis Bouilhet, Baudelaire, Gustave Flaubert, and Eugène Fromentin, it had its *raison d'être*, and was not unworthy of the sacrifices its publication entailed upon its owners.

The dream I had nursed in my childish days of following a literary career side by side with Louis de Cormenin was about to be realized. Besides, I was happy in the thought of winning public appre-

ciation for Flaubert and Bouilhet, for if the *Revue de Paris* belonged to me, naturally it belonged to them also. The whole of the poem "Melænis" appeared in the second issue (November, 1851); it contained three thousand lines. That was considered a bold stroke, but I confess I have never regretted it. If a poem is beautiful surely it matters little whether it be short or long, for it is a finer production than any story, or any historical, literary, or artistic criticism such as usually form the subject matter of periodicals intended for general circulation. The poem appeared, and met with a favourable reception. It was dedicated to Gustave Flaubert. For the first time the public saw the names of those brother-friends in conjunction, of two men each permeated by the other's influence, and who were never again to part company.

They had lived so long together, absorbed by the same pursuits, inspired by the same aims, and following the same ideal, that they had come to adopt similar modes of speech, and in their attitudes and gestures they resembled one another. As they were both tall and strongly built, prematurely bald, wore long moustachios of the same colour, and as their speech had the same local peculiarity, the resemblance was accentuated, and they were often taken for brothers.

I am able to assert that no blood relationship existed between them; but they might have adopted as their joint device the words which close a sonnet addressed by the Comte de Grammont to the Marquis de Belloy:—"Non amici, fratres, non sanguine, corde."

It was easy to launch Bouilhet, as apart from "Melænis" he had nearly ready a volume of detached poems. But Flaubert's case was more difficult, for he had the habit of shutting up his manuscripts in a drawer. He considered "Novembre" too juvenile a production, and though "l'Education Sentimentale" had many beauties, the general effect of the work was marred by a confused plot.

There was yet another book, the "Tentation de Saint Antoine," which could not be published in separate parts lest it should become unintelligible, and yet could not be produced in a single number of the review, because it contained at least two volumes of dialogue. Surely, to select certain episodes and appear before the public for the first time with a few fragments of a book without cohesion or connection between the parts could not be thought of! Flaubert was undecided, and I was no less so.

I had urged him to write the account of our travels in Greece, which might be told in a brief and interesting manner, and would introduce the author in a creditable manner to his readers. My advice was rejected.

Flaubert affirmed that travels were only of use in forming an author's style, and that the incidents of travel might be utilized in a novel, but not in a narrative. In his opinion a book of travels and a newspaper paragraph were much on the same level—they were a low class of literature. He had a soul above both. I did not press the matter, for I well knew that it would be useless to do so, but I wrote and begged him to give the matter his consideration, and told him that I should visit him in November, at Croisset, for the purpose of coming with him and Bouilhet to some decision.

He wrote me a letter upon this subject which I have preserved. It is worth reproducing, for in it he tries to explain his own character and offers some sort of self-criticism. The letter also contains a confession, which Flaubert never afterwards repeated:—

"*Tuesday, 21st October, 1851.*—I am eager for your presence here, so that we may have a long earnest talk and I may come to some sort of decision. Last Sunday Bouilhet and I read together some fragments of 'Saint Antoine.' We chose Apollonius of Tyanus, the portion relating to some of the gods, and the second half of the second part, that is to

say, the 'Courtisane,' 'Thamar,' 'Nebuchadnezzar,' 'The Sphinx,' 'The Chimæra,' and all the animals. It would be extremely difficult to publish fragments; there are many fine things in it, you know, but—but—that is not enough in itself, and I am afraid even the most indulgent readers, yes! the most indulgent, would misunderstand me. Of course, I shall have in my favour a great many worthy people who will not comprehend my meaning, but who will pretend that they do, and admire me, lest their neighbours should seem more clear-sighted than themselves.

"Bouilhet's objection to the publication is that I have put all the worst faults of my style into the book and only some of its good qualities. According to him, such a step would be injurious to me. Next Sunday we shall read the whole of the part concerning the gods. Perhaps that would serve our purpose best, but I have formed no independent judgment either upon that or upon the subject generally. I know not what to think, and am like Buridan's ass. I have not hitherto been accused of having no opinions of my own or of want of individuality. My own personality has usually been tolerably present to my consciousness, and yet when it comes to the most important decision an artist can take I am absolutely at a loss, and lack the qualities I believed myself possessed of. I stultify myself, and become helpless without the smallest effort.

"My one idea is to get advice from others, for I seem to be entirely without initiative. The objections for and against seem to me to be about equal. It will be heads or tails with me, and I am equally indifferent either way.

"Should I publish I shall do it in the most stupid way in the world, to imitate others, and, at their wish, without any impulse of my own. I have no need nor wish of the kind. And do you not think we should simply follow the dictates of our own heart? The kind of coward who, challenged to

fight a duel, meets his opponent because his friends tell him he must do so, although he has no fancy for the encounter and thinks it quite unnecessary, is surely more despicable than the undisguised coward who swallows the insult and stays quietly at home. Yes! I am repelled by the feeling that the suggestion is not my own, but the idea of another or others, and this may be a proof that I am wrong.

"Besides, let us look beyond the present; if I publish, it will not be by halves. One ought to do a thing well if one does it at all. I shall spend the winter in Paris, live like an ordinary man, an excitable, fevered existence, full of scheming and plotting. I shall have to do many things from which I shrink, and which, even now, revolt me.

"Now, am I fitted for such a life? You well know that I am subject to alternate fits of enthusiasm and of discouragement. But you cannot know what an infinite number of lethargic tendencies seem to wrap me round, nor the fogs which often dull my brain. Often I feel bored to death at the prospect of having to do the slightest thing, and I have the greatest difficulty in grasping the simplest idea. The experiences of my youth were like a narcotic, which has stupefied me for the rest of my days. I abhor life; I have pronounced the word, and so let it remain!—life and all that reminds me that it has to be borne. It is a misery to have to eat, and dress oneself, and to be about in the world.

"That feeling has never left me, neither in Paris, nor at Rouen, nor upon the Nile during our travels. Your accurate mind and intelligence often rebelled against my Norman vagueness, which I was tactless enough to try to excuse, and you on your side did not fail to reproach me with it. Do you imagine that I have spent thirty years of my life after a manner you consider blameworthy out of obstinacy and without careful consideration? Why have I not had mistresses? Why have I preached chastity and remained in this hole of a province?

“Do you not think that if I were constitutionally fitted for the part I should not be as much disposed to play the fast man up in Paris as others? Certainly I should find it tolerably amusing. Just reflect a little and tell me if it would be possible. Heaven did not mean me for that sort of thing any more than it meant me to be a fine waltzer. Few men have had fewer mistresses than I have had. That is the price one pays for the ‘plastic beauty’ Théo admires so much. And if I do not get into print that will be the Nemesis the dreams and aspirations of my youth have brought upon me. Is it not best to follow one’s own bent? Perhaps if I dislike movement it may be because I do not know how to walk! There are moments when I fancy it would be best to give up writing a serious book and to fall back upon the high style, upon my old exaggerations and extravagancies, and to abandon myself a prey to any philosophies, fantastic eccentricities which might come to me. Who knows? Perhaps some day I might give birth to a book which would have at least the merit of being my own. I am to publish my books, granted! Am I able to stand the strain?”

“Stronger men than I am have broken down under it. Perhaps at the end of four years I should have become a cretin. I should be working then not for art alone, which up to the present time has sufficed me, and if I require anything else now it proves that I am beginning to decline, and if what are merely the accidents of art give me pleasure it is a proof that I have already deteriorated. The dread lest I should be actuated by pride in this matter alone withholds me from saying, ‘No! And for ever, No!’ I love to retire into my shell like the snail which dreads contact with the dust of the road, or fears the tread of the passer-by. I do not say that I am incapable of any kind of exertion, but it must not last long and must be pleasurable. If I am strong I am not patient, and it is patience which does everything. Had I been a juggler I

might have lifted heavy weights, but I could never have carried them about at the end of my finger. The kind of daring and concealed craft, all the arts of life and of *savoir vivre* required is a closed book in my case, and I should make many blunders. In your last short story you suppressed two passages you thought dangerous; it was a humiliating concession to make, and I was angry with you for it. I am not sure that I am not still angry, and perhaps I may never be able to forgive you.

"The Muse (Louise Colet) reproaches me with being tied to my mother's apron string. I went to London tied to it, and it would willingly be attached to me in Paris. Oh! If you could but relieve me of my brother-in-law and of . . . how little I should complain of the pressure of the apron string. Yesterday I went into all these matters exhaustively with my mother. She had no advice to offer. Her last words were, 'Publish it, if you have written something you think good.' That does not help me much! I wish you, however, to ponder all that I have written down here, to take me in my entirety and to meditate upon me. Notwithstanding my saying in 'l'Education Sentimentale,' there is always something kept back even in the most intimate confidences; I have told you everything, and been as sincere with you as a man can possibly be with himself. At least I believe I have told you my most secret thought. I have confidence in you and will do as you wish. My individuality troubles me, so I place it in your hands. I little thought I should say all this when I began my letter. I shall now send it as I have been impelled to write it; perhaps our future discussions will be made easier by it. Adieu, I embrace you and send you a heap of affectionate messages."

I wrote a letter as long in reply to his, and I have kept a rough copy of it, for I wished to show it to Bouilhet, who was troubled by Flaubert's moral and mental condition. The contents of the letter may be summed up under two heads —



"You do not hate life; you only hate your present mode of life, which is a very different matter. I cannot make up your mind for you, because you can and should be the only judge of what you yourself wish to do."

Then, referring to our journey, I said a rather ungenerous thing —

"I will not be your tempter; it is enough to have been so once."

When I visited him at Croisset, Flaubert had come to no decision. Bouilhet and I were in despair. He was once more at his "Saint Antoine" readings, was intoxicated by the harmony of his sentences, and quite lost in self-admiration.

In front of a large fire, by lamplight, the sound of his own voice seemed to go to his head. The kind of rhetoric he indulged in had taken possession of him. He vowed that he would publish his book and compel the bourgeois to recognize it as a *chef d'œuvre*. The next day, after a night's sleep, and when he had calmed down, he was so exhausted he could scarcely rise from the sofa, and said, "I shall never publish anything!"

These alternations between a state of exaltation and a state of exhaustion continued for more than a fortnight. Bouilhet, like myself, did not venture to advise him, and would not accept the responsibility of deciding for him.

Finally Flaubert resolved to go to Paris in order to consult Théophile Gautier, and Bouilhet observed —

"You are like Panurge consulting the oracles."

At that time I was living in the Cité d'Orléans, and my windows looked out upon a magnificent garden—all that was left of the park attached to the residence of the three Duverney brothers. The house was uninhabited, and the garden neglected. There, in the heart of Paris, it lay like a virgin forest in miniature. Long grasses grew as they do in the savannah, creeping roses clambered over the sycamores, and the horse-chestnut overshadowed

an undergrowth of cystus. The ring-doves lodged in an epicéa, and a weeping willow hung over the basin of a fountain which was choked up by water-plants. It was a wonderful place of rest, both for the mind and the eyes. They have extended the Rue Taitbout to the Rue d'Aumale, and have destroyed this oasis. I made Flaubert stay with me in my rooms, and one night after dinner Gautier and he had the desired consultation. Neither understood the other, for they spoke a different language. After listening to Flaubert's views upon art, and the duties of the artist, Gautier smiled slightly, and harked back upon the past, as he was inclined to do sometimes.

"I understand that," he said. "It is an illness as common to beginners as measles is common to childhood. When we lived in the Rue du Doyenné, with Arsène Houssaye, Camille Rogier, and Gérard de Nerval, we were full of such ideas. Gérard de Nerval, with the help of a pair of steps and an old brocaded curtain, had made a tent for himself. I know what it is to produce *chefs-d'œuvre*. I wrote the 'Comédie de la Mort.' On condition that the publisher would print my verses I gave him two prose books. Seventy-five copies of them were sold. Every man writes *chefs-d'œuvre* in his youth—at least, he believes that he does. Casimir Delavigne, Ponsard, and Bouchardy will prove to you that 'l'Ecole des Vieillards,' 'Lucrece,' and the 'Sonneur de Saint-Paul' are *chefs-d'œuvre*. In this, as in everything else, the saving virtue is faith. You believe that the writer has a mission, that the poet is a high priest, and that art is divine. Flaubert, you are very simple. The author sells copy just as the linen-draper sells handkerchiefs, only people give more for cotton goods than they do for words, and that is unjust. The whole of Greek sculpture is summed up in the Venus of Milo, and the whole of poetry, at least, of French poetry, may be reduced to one volume. This volume has been preserved, and therefore the literary art of France is

safe. Shall I add one line to this volume? Who can tell? Neither you, nor I, nor anyone else. Perhaps in two hundred years the question will be answered. To keep back manuscripts is an act of folly. As soon as a book is finished it should be published, and the best price obtained for it."

This view of the case had a deterrent effect upon Flaubert, and led him to put the "Tentation de Saint Antoine" back in its portfolio, and then to write "Madame Bovary." Was that, then, Gautier's real literary creed? Certainly not! No writer held more exalted views on the theory of art. But he was passing through a period of depression such as too often occurred in his life. The necessity of writing his weekly *feuilleton* in the *Presse* had become odious to him. He was wearied to death of writing perforce an account of every piece produced on the boards of Paris theatres, of those represented at the Hippodrome, as well as at the Comédie Française.

This intolerable burden, which he could not throw off altogether, because with it he would have lost his most certain source of income, he had shifted temporarily to the shoulders of Louis de Cormenin, who had been writing the dramatic *feuilleton* of the *Presse* without arousing suspicion. As I have already said, he could adopt different literary styles with astonishing facility. He had assimilated Gautier's manner, and could imitate his productions so as to deceive even those most familiar with them.

I used often to hear Gautier say to him, "Little Cat"—that was his favourite nickname for Louis—"you have written some very good Théo to-day."

When Louis was absent or otherwise engaged I would take his place. I have knocked off more than one of these *feuilletons* about matters I have entirely forgotten. Only one do I remember, an account of the "Joseph" of Mehul, which had been revived. We thus gave Gautier a little rest. He was then writing his "Italia."

What book has the air of having been composed in the calm seclusion of a library where maps and plans and the catalogues of museums facilitate research. As a matter of fact it was composed in a printing office amid the chatter of compositors, the noise of their presses, the whirr of machinery, the slamming of doors, and the din of a big workshop in full activity.

Gautier had not a single note, nor a document, nor a book to refer to. His memory was perfectly astounding. He could turn over its pages in full confidence that it would never fail him. He wrote without erasure or revision.

When he had written ten lines the overseer would cut them off, hand them to the compositor, and so on until the article or chapter was finished. When the proofs were brought to Gautier he would mark the errors with his finger-nail, and then go off drawing deep breaths of relief, like a miner whose day's underground labour is over. Dating from 1850 nearly all his books were written in this way. It had become such a habit with him that he once said to me —

"Schiller used to have the scent of rotten apples near him to excite his imagination. I believe the smell of printer's ink is almost as necessary to me."

This master of French prose actually cared only for poetry, and rhymes were ever jostling one another in his brain. They served as a relief to him amid the pressure and disappointment of daily life.

He met with one strange disappointment. Corneille's centenary was to be celebrated on the 6th June, 1851, at the Comédie Française. On these occasions it is customary to represent some suitable piece and to get an actor to recite a poem specially composed in honour of the author in question.

Théophile Gautier was commissioned to write some lines which were to be declaimed either between the acts or at the end of the performance. We were living under a Republic, and Gautier thought he might be excused giving Louis XIV. a

place among the gods. He therefore reproached him with having left —

“ *Corneille sans souliers Molière sans tombeau,*”

and finished off the poem thus —

“ *Dans la posterité, perspective inconnue,  
Le poète grandit et le roi diminue.*”

“ *Pou—ou !*” as Figaro says ; our poor Théo had no drawbridge thrown down to him by posterity, but he was abused like a schoolboy who has blundered over his exercise.

The Bureau des Théâtres was then subject to the control of the Beaux Arts, which was directed by M. Guizard. He was a very worthy man with good manners, and had been a prefect, I think, formerly. He managed the affairs of the Beaux Arts pretty much as he would have managed the carrying trade of the country or any other business. He had the degree of administrative capacity which enables a man to fill almost any position, but does not enable him to fill it worthily. He uttered a cry of horror when, according to custom, the verses Gautier had written were submitted to him before being publicly recited. He stated in plain terms that it is subversive of authority to express such sentiments, that they fostered revolutionary ideas, and that even hydra-headed anarchy would pronounce similar opinions had she not been muzzled by a repressive government. Then what would M. Faucher say ? Léon Faucher was Minister of the Interior. I had heard him in my presence say to Pétin, the inventor of an air-balloon —

“ Pray, sir, what need is there of your balloons ? Surely trains should satisfy us !”

Thus it came to pass that M. de Guizard, who represented M. Léon Faucher, who in his turn represented the majority in the Assemblée Nationale, protected Louis XIV., rebuked Gautier, and suppressed his verses. Corneille's apotheosis was incomplete on that occasion. Théo was much dis-

comfited by this incident; he was afraid he might be accused of Jacobinism and fancied the police were upon his traces. He was not mistaken. He was placed under close surveillance, but for reasons which had no connection with politics, Corneille, Louis XIV., or M. de Guizard.

One morning, while Flaubert was still staying with me, a violent ring at the bell was quickly followed by the appearance of Gautier, who rushed into my study. He was quite pale, without a hat, his hair was in disorder, and his coat was buttoned awry. What could be the matter? Before telling me he looked at himself in the glass and said, in a voice of despair —

"How hairy I am!" Then he continued,

"Leur poursuite enragée et ma fuite éperdue!"

quoting from Ruy Blas.

We did not understand him. He then threw himself down upon a sofa and said —

"See what it is to have free institutions. They want to imprison me."

That very morning two emissaries of the law, because he never thought fit to mount guard, had appeared at his house and served him with a writ which gave them authority to take him away. He had only just had time to escape down a back staircase and to make his way to me. I said to him, perhaps a little naïvely —

"But why don't you mount guard? It would save you much annoyance."

He replied with a decision which closed the discussion —

"I have not the right to alter the beauty of my figure by encasing it in a ridiculous costume. I am already sufficiently humiliated by having to wear a great-coat like a door-keeper's, without disgracing my person by a tunic with epaulets and by a shako with a cockade. In 1835 I wished to join the Saint Simonians, but when I found that I should have to wear white trousers, a red waistcoat, and

long frock-coat I recoiled from the horror of it and then and there abandoned the idea of adopting the creed of the god Père-et-Mère. I wish to become a member only of a religion which respects an eye for colour and takes the lines of the human form into account. I would rather languish in a prison like Latude than be unfaithful to my principles."

Once, however, after his spirit had been broken by a first incarceration, he resolved to serve in the Garde Nationale, and for that purpose adopted a fanciful costume, and presented himself at the meeting place in grey trousers, a yellow waistcoat covered with blue flowers, a green coat and gilt buttons, a pink cravat and a collar à la Colin.

He wore a policeman's cap above his long floating hair, and, by way of a gun, had an old-fashioned musket with a lock lent him by a painter called Boissard. The Captain almost exploded with indignation, and his men broke into laughter.

Gautier was packed off with an injunction not to attempt such jokes again. That suited him exactly. For some time he was left alone.

Then summonses from the officer on guard began to arrive at the porter's lodge.

Gautier ignored them entirely, and, in consequence, had to seek refuge with me. I had a large apartment; I gave him a room next to Flaubert's, and I often heard them holding discussions at three and four in the morning instead of going to bed.

After a fortnight, when Gautier thought he had eluded the search of men whom he called *sbirri*, in all seriousness, Gautier returned home.

The very next day they arrested him, and I received a note from him to the following effect —

"Come and console me in prison; I am at the 'Haricots.' Bring me a rope-ladder and a file."

I hastened to intercede with the staff of the Garde Nationale.

The officer in command was General Foltz, who laughed in my face when I asked him to release

Gautier. It was not hard to divine that it gave him a certain satisfaction to keep a poet under lock and key. All I could gain from him was permission to go and visit the prisoner. I cannot very well recollect where the prison set apart for rebellious Gardes Nationaux was situated. It was called "Les Haricots" in somewhat unofficial language, and I am inclined to think it was in the neighbourhood of the Orléans Railway Station.

I found Gautier walking up and down and execrating his fate, in a well-lighted room, which was not in the least like a dungeon. He was brooding over future vengeance, and talked of erecting barricades. The notion of being shut up, locked into his room at night, made him positively miserable, but only after some difficulty did he obtain the alleviation that the door only should be fastened.

The governor of the prison said —

"It is against orders, and I lay myself open to a serious reprimand."

It is a fact that whenever he was left alone at night, or was at too great a distance from others to make himself heard at once, Théophile Gautier was seized with terror. He could not endure the darkness, it seemed to him that death lay waiting for him amid the shadows. The idea of death haunted him, and he was disturbed by the thought of what may follow it.

He never laughed at any form of religious belief. If promises of heaven or threats of hell were alluded to, painful transmigration to other forms of existence, the celestial hunting-grounds of the Red Indian, the Jewish Gehenna, or the tortures inflicted by Eblis spoken of—he attempted to deny nothing. He would throw up his chin and say —

"Perhaps it is true."

On an important occasion I once heard him affirm, "I am a primitive Christian." He brooded over these ideas, and was often made unhappy by them. Once he told me that when at Grenada he



had lain down in one of the halls of the Alhambra, and had fallen asleep. He awoke, and said to himself —

“The hour will come when you will be laid out like that, and will not be able to rise again. From that moment,” he added, “nothing seemed to amuse me any more.”

Like Goethe, he had a horror of all that was ugly, and death seemed to him the essence of ugliness. Like Goethe, too, he had taken for his motto, “Memento Vivere.”

Whilst we were occupied with the *Revue de Paris* political papers reiterated perpetually, “The political horizon grows dark.” Certainly it was growing dark. The dual power introduced by the Constitution of 1848 had logically produced a result which had not been foreseen. In reality, it was inevitable that there should be struggle and antagonism between a governing body consisting of an irresponsible Assembly possessed of unlimited powers and the executive authority of a President who had been elected for four years, on the condition that he was not to be re-elected. The struggle had begun, and was now at its height. These two powers had entered into no contract to support one another; although the President of the Republic had taken an oath of allegiance to the *Assemblée Nationale*, the *Assemblée* was not, and could not, be bound to him by any engagement. The *Assemblée* was divided, or rather split up, into parties, all of which had their different aspirations.

The Legitimists wished for the return of Henry V.; the Orleanists for the regency of the Prince de Joinville during the minority of the Comte de Paris. The “Fusionnistes,” as they were called, desired a reconciliation between the two branches of the Royal House of France, and to see the *Comte de Paris* adopted by the *Comte de Chambord*. The Republicans were for a Dictatorship in the hands of General Cavaignac. The Socialists dreamt of a kind of theocratic democracy, with themselves as high priests.

There was impotence in this diversity of opinion and confusion worse confounded.

Meanwhile, at the Elysée, the Prince-President, taciturn and apparently indifferent, bided his time. Once, in a moment of expansion, he had repeated a saying by Saint-Just: "*L'avenir est aux apathiques*" ("The future belongs to apathetic people").

In one respect he was possessed of an advantage over the Assemblée—he said nothing, and the Assemblée did nothing but talk. It is of the very essence of authority that it should have been imposed or usurped.

Emulation existed between the President and the Assemblée, a kind of steeplechase was being run, and the goal was to be reached by means of an illegal act. Who would reach it first, the one man or the many?

The President wanted to suppress the Assemblée, the Assemblée to suppress the President. No one knew when the crisis would occur, but all were sure that it was inevitable.

About this period I constantly heard men say —

"Do you know? It will be to-morrow. The President is to sleep at Vincennes, and every measure is already taken. The army is with the representatives of the people. It is time to be done with that traitor."

And perhaps, on the same day, an hour later, I would hear from another source —

"You know, it will be to-morrow? All our measures are taken. The Assemblée is to be dispersed by force of arms. The army is with the Prince-President; it is time to have done with these chatterers."

So the talk ran, but very little heed was paid to it in Paris. Only now and then, towards evening, men might be seen to glide secretly round about the Elysée Palace, trying to peer into the garden and courtyard, and to look through the windows. They were Deputies who were trying to ascertain if an ambush had been prepared for them.

Chance threw me in the way of witnessing a

scene from the prologue of the drama which was to end in the *coup d'état* of the 2nd December. I was acquainted with the Count de Morny, and had shown him the photographs I had taken in Egypt, Nubia, Palestine, and Syria. At that time they were an object of interest, for I was the first to reproduce in this manner the different architectural monuments of Cairo, the ruined temples on the banks of the Nile, the various points of view at Jerusalem, and the remains at Baulbek.

Morny had asked me to show my collection of photographs to the President, whom they might interest. I thought of offering him a specimen of my work. Morny agreed, and we had fixed a day to visit the Elysée together. On Wednesday, the 26th November, I went to Count de Morny's house, No. 17, Avenue des Champs-Élysées. His house was jokingly called "*La Niche à Fidèle*" ("*Fidelio's nook*"), because it was situated near the abode of the Comtesse Lehon, who was believed to have conferred her favours upon the Count, whose motto, encircling a hydrangea flower, was "*Tace et Memento.*"

The Comte de Flahaut, Gabriel Delessert, and Fernand de Montguyon, who are all dead now, were assembled at de Morny's house. The President received us with the graciousness he had by nature, and which his education had developed in the highest degree. He must have already contemplated writing his history of Julius Cæsar, for he questioned me about the traces to be found in Egypt, of the victor of Pharsalia, and he looked at the portrait of Ptolemy Cesarion, which I had reproduced from the western façade of the Temple of Kalabschek. Of the island of Perim he also spoke, and said that as soon as Suez should be connected with Alexandria by a railway it would be occupied by the English. What he foresaw has come about.

Just as I was taking leave the President said—

"I am at home always on Mondays; I shall hope to see you."

On the following Monday I dined in town. Besides the Comte de Flahaut and the Comte de Morny, the guests present were Prosper Mérimée, Victor Cousin, and Viollet-le-Duc, all of whom are now dead.

In the course of the evening Morny asked me, "Shall you go to the Elysée on Monday?" to which I replied by a shrug of the shoulders and a hesitating gesture. Morny pressed me.

"Do come; it will interest you," he said.

On Monday, the 1st December, I went to the Elysée Palace at about nine in the evening. The reception was held in the apartments of the ground floor, where I had often slept when after the revolution of 1848 it was used as a barrack for the Garde Nationale.

There were not many present. If I remember rightly the officers belonging to the garrison laid aside their sabres before being introduced to the President, who remained standing, with his head slightly bent forward. He seemed quite self-possessed.

I was talking to the Marquis Turgot, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, in a corner of the room, when I saw Henri Vieyra, whom I knew, enter the room. He had commanded the battalion I had served in during the June insurrection. I had seen him at work, and knew that he was a man of great energy, who had never hidden his devotion nor spared himself in the service of Prince Louis Napoleon Buonaparte. For some short time he had commanded the staff of the Garde Nationale. When he went forward to salute the President the latter advanced towards him and held him by the button of his coat while he spoke with him in low tones. Their conversation lasted nearly twenty minutes. Then Vieyra went out of the room without speaking to anyone else. Turgot laughed, and said to me —

"Vieyra has gone out as if he was the bearer of a State secret."

The truth was that the President had just con-

fided his project to him, and that very night the blow was to be struck.

Vieyra, as he commanded the staff of the Garde-Nationale, was to see that the drums and a reserve of ammunition were deposited at the different *mairies*. At all costs, too, he was to veto any attempt to call out the Gardes Nationaux either by battalions or by companies, or in small detachments. Vieyra accepted the charge laid upon him, and carried it out to the letter.

It was growing late. Count de Morny, whom I expected, had not yet arrived. I began to weary of the constant stream of people who entered, bowed, and took their places. At half-past ten I departed and went to the Opéra Comique, where a piece called "*Le Château de la Barbe bleue*" was being performed for the first time. I arrived just at the opening of the second act. At that time the comic-opera had not been superseded by the operetta, and Hérold, Boieldieu, Auber, and Halévy had devoted no inconsiderable gifts to its production. It was thought a proof of good taste to be interested in the appearance of a new piece upon the boards of a theatre which the fashionable world still called *Feydeau's*. The house was thronged, and ladies in full dress displayed their neck and shoulders under the light of the chandeliers.

In one of the boxes facing the stage I could see Morny smilingly engaged in fixing a fair young girl with his opera glasses who was doing her best to attract attention in the balcony. In the distance we exchanged a bow of recognition.

In the couloir which communicates with the first tier of boxes I fell in with General Cavaignac, who swayed from side to side as usual, and held his clever, powerful head high above his white cravat. We stopped to talk, and parted when the bell announced that the third act was about to begin. I little thought then that within the space of two minutes I had bowed to the conqueror of the morrow and spoken with the man he was to subdue.

I accompanied Théophile Gautier home, walking slowly along the boulevard. Parisian life seemed to follow its regular course and everything to be as usual; a few cabs drove past us, the ground floor rooms of the great restaurants were brilliant with light, and some few belated pedestrians walked along near us smoking cigars or humming an air. There was not a soldier nor a policeman to be seen. Paris was about to fall asleep as usual. I stood for a long time in front of Gautier's door and spoke of Constantinople, where he hoped to go in the course of the following year. When we parted it was past one o'clock in the morning.

I was astonished when I reached home to find that Louis de Cormenin was waiting for me.

"Something extraordinary is going on," he said. "Just now, at about 12 o'clock, as I passed through the Rue Ville-du-Temple, I saw that the public printing offices were guarded by a company of the Garde Municipale under the orders of a captain. I wished for an explanation, but the reply 'Passez au large!' ('Pass on!') was scarcely polite. I know the generals held a council to-day with Saint-Armaud. You will see that to-morrow they will be firing in the streets of Paris. My father is at Joigny, and I am not sorry for it. I do not know which side will begin the struggle, but I feel convinced that the defeated party will be ill-treated, for men do not forgive or forget their own acts of injustice, and avenge them on their adversaries." Louis was deeply moved. I fancied he was exaggerating, and blamed him for his gloomy prognostications. The next morning my servant informed me that during the night the walls had been placarded, that regiments of soldiers were marching through the streets, and that the Assemblée Nationale had been dissolved. He added that the Comte de Morny was appointed Minister for Home Affairs and several generals were under arrest. The *coup d'état* had been effected.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE DECREE OF THE 17TH FEBRUARY.

SHOULD M. Génie, late chief clerk to M. Guizot at the Foreign Office, have written his memoirs they would doubtless contain negotiations which were instrumental in bringing about the *coup d'état* of the second December, 1851. I have often heard him narrate the phases through which a kind of embassy passed he was charged with by Prince Louis Napoleon. It concerned several exalted personages whom it is not for me to name. According to M. Génie's detailed account, which he gladly repeated, it would appear that the *coup d'état*, as it first took form in the mind of the President, was to be entirely a parliamentary change, but that by degrees, under the influence of counsels he deferred to, the original design had been gradually modified. Finally the event took a military character, and was followed immediately by a dictatorship. The crisis was an exceedingly violent one. On the first day Paris remained almost unmoved, but on the next men began to wonder and there were some slight symptoms of resistance. The third day, a Thursday, the population was aroused, and the signs of an approaching upheaval were noticeable among the surging crowd. The repressive measures—or shall I say aggressive measures?—were brutal. The soldiers let loose upon the boulevard fired at random, and did not spare their ammunition. Several cannon balls found their way into peaceful homes, passers-by were killed, trees were shattered, and doors driven in. Nowhere was there any serious resistance.

Two or three barricades were raised in the Quartier Saint Antoine. Baudin, a representative of the people, was killed upon one of them. He was crowned with the martyr's crown, his memory was invoked, and men declared that he had died to vindicate the law and the rights of Parliament. I cannot hold this opinion, because on the 15th May, 1848, he was among those who were ready to attack the Assemblée Nationale, and showed himself indifferent to all law and to an inviolable Parliament which had been brought together by universal suffrage.\*

In our country it is ever thus. A fact is criminal or glorious by chance, and is judged apparently according to the circumstance of its taking place during the ides or upon one of the kalends. Abstract justice is foreign to us; it must be foreign to a people which accepts every accomplished fact for the sole reason that it is an accomplished fact. The only government since the 10th August, 1792, which seems to me to have been established upon a legal basis was that of Charles X. Every other form of government which has succeeded was the outcome either of chance or of force, and yet each was legalized. Had not the Mont-Valérien fortress been retaken at an opportune moment I believe that the commune would have been legalized. We cannot get out of the vicious circle we seem to move in.

Revolutions produce despotism, and despotism produces revolutions. In France the oscillations of the political pendulum are excessive; scarcely ever does it pause in the middle where safety and strength are only to be found.

The *coup d'état* of the 2nd December was a natural consequence of the political uncertainty in which France has subsisted for ninety years; it was merely an incident of the state of existence she has accepted. It has been stated that the President

\* See Report of the Séances of the Assemblée Nationale I., I., p. 231.



only forestalled the Assemblée, and that if he had not taken action on the 2nd December a week later he would have been arrested, imprisoned, and deposed. It may be true, but I cannot feel sure of it. His act displeased me for the sole reason that it was an act of violence.

The bourgeoisie, which applauded everything at the time, could scarcely resist the Government now imposed upon it. What the bourgeoisie actually did was to endure it in the beginning, then to grow used to it, and finally to admire it. I remember I saw a coarsely-drawn sketch only a few days after the 2nd December traced with a piece of chalk upon the door of the hall in the courtyard of the Palais Législatif, and intended for the Assemblée, which struck me by its powerful symbolism. It represented a triangle. On one of the sides was written, "Corporal Pioupiou," on the other "Père Oremus," on the third "Jacques Bonhomme," and in the space enclosed by the three lines, "Enfoncé le bourgeois" ("the bourgeois is out of it," or "is exploded").

The new order of things was, in fact, to find its strength in the support of the army, of the clergy, and the democracy at the expense of the bourgeoisie, namely, of the class which held in its hands the capital of the country, and which had governed it under the dynasty of July. The same class, now ignored, had endeavoured to recover the reins of government after the revolution of February, and it imagined that it had achieved a master stroke when it voted for the measure of 31st May, 1850, which, while preserving the name of universal suffrage, introduced in reality a restricted form of the suffrage.

Now that political life has become, without any figure of speech, a battle ground, ambitious men are too impatient to wait for the elector's vote. Recourse is had to the cannon ball and to the bayonet, and even to petroleum; the desire for power suggests violent measures. To gain a minister's portfolio no one any longer hesitates to bring fire and

sword into a city. It is therefore difficult to feel any kind of interest in the victors, or any kind of pity for the vanquished. Victory is present first in one camp and then in another.

Our political struggles recall the incidents of the Thirty Years' War; defeats and victories follow each other so rapidly, first on one side and then on the other, that it is almost impossible to know at any given time to whom the disputed province belongs. One characteristic in all cases, however, leaves a permanent mark—the harsh mode of repression, the severity of the conqueror.

After the events of June, 1848, and of December, 1851, a number of persons were subjected to proscription and relegated to Algeria. In vain did I endeavour to detach myself from politics and from party conflicts. I could not but be bewildered when I saw such men as Thiers, Duvergier de Hauranne, and Charles de Rémusat driven over the frontier. What end could be served by these severe measures, which later were certain to be annulled? Then with respect to Victor Hugo's banishment. What a grief to those who admired him, and what imprudence in those who drove him forth and dipped his pen in the gall which produced the "*Châtiments*."

"Do not offend living poets," says Heinrich Heine; "they have weapons which are more formidable than Jove's thunder, his who was himself the offspring of poets."

I had been once to the Elysée before the *coup d'état*. After that event I did not go again. The throng at the door was excessive, and the atmosphere stifling. Had he been unsuccessful the President would have been hunted down like a wolf. Now that he was victorious he became a genius, a hero, a saviour of his country. Some in their premature enthusiasm even said, "He is greater than his uncle!" But the moral aspect of his act remained unchanged. Morality recognizes neither success nor unsuccess. It sees only guilt and innocence, for success or defeat do not affect the moral aspect of an

action. Wise men dwell apart from these transactions, and they are right; at least, they will not be carried away, join in the acclamations, nor in the unjust anathemas of the crowd. They remember the saying of Francis Bacon, "That which the vulgar approve is necessarily false."

It seems to me that despotism is not the outcome of the will of one man, but is the product of the servile spirit of the community. Did not Tacitus say of the consuls, knights, and senators after the death of Augustus, "Et ruerunt ad servitium?"

The population of Paris was on the point of rising that 4th of December, and had not the troops fired upon it without discrimination it would no doubt have risen. The same populace now cheered and clapped the President when he appeared in public, and surrounded him in such crowds that the horses of his carriage had some difficulty in forcing a passage.

A writer of popular songs, Pierre Dupont, who had a certain reputation, was known to have indulged in the most violent expressions against the *coup d'état*, against the decennial presidency, and against the empire. He was a systematic and uncompromising opponent. One day, a few years after the 2nd December, the Emperor was passing along the Boulevard des Italiens before the Rue de Grammont. His open carriage was going at a foot pace. There were cries and plaudits, and the waving of hats. I was near by watching it all. Suddenly a tall young fellow with fair hair and beard broke through the crowd, approached the carriage, and cried out —

"Sire! Allow me to take your hand."

Napoleon hesitated. The man continued —

"I am worthy," and shouted, "Vive l'Empereur!"

It was Pierre Dupont. Had he suddenly turned Imperialist? Not at all. He had simply obeyed the unreasoning impulse which emanates like an electric current from crowds of men massed

together, and sometimes impels the coldest characters to commit actions which contradict their whole lives. The public voice which now curses is the same voice formerly raised in acclamation. We must close our ears and not give it heed. If we wish to retain our self-respect we must learn to be unpopular.

The Parliamentary tribune had been removed. "Take that away!" said the President, touching it with his cane.

A great many eloquent men had been sent into exile, many newspapers had been suppressed. Silence was the order of the day. All France was like a sick man's chamber, everyone spoke in hushed tones. However, it was necessary to set forth the conditions under which the newspapers which had not been suppressed would still be allowed to subsist, and the legislative decree of the 19th February, 1852, was promulgated. In the days of the first Republic, under the Convention, journalists were guillotined. Under the decennial presidency and under the Empire they did not guillotine them. That showed progress.

Like the women of the town the public press was placed under the administration of the police. The first warning was followed by a second and a third, then the paper was suspended, and, if that did not answer, suppressed.

The system was a detestable one, and those newspapers which were able to live under it could not have known how to die. Personally, I could not be affected by it—no law, no decree has ever troubled me. I have always said what I wish to say, which proves that my talk was not very formidable. Besides, as I never wrote as a journalist I necessarily escaped the rigorous treatment dealt out to journalists. But I suffered nevertheless from the trammels imposed upon the press, and which were enough to stifle it.

The pen had to be held suspended over the paper before one dared write a word, for as at the tribunal

of the confessional the sin might be one of thought, or of word, of commission, or of omission.

He who held the ferule was both judge and partisan, and his authority was one, and yet divided. The authority exercised in the provinces by the *Préfets* and the *Sous-Préfets* had for its representative in Paris the Minister of the Interior. Like a good colleague he was ready to grant anything to any minister, *directeur*, divisional or official head of a department who might complain of a newspaper article or ask that someone should be made "an example" of. As usual, the underlings were the most intolerant, the most pitiless in their repression. If the case were fortunate enough to come before the Minister there was some chance of escape; if it came to the Emperor's ears he would shrug his shoulders and say, "Those people are too stupid!"

I do not deny it, but he made use of them because they were all he had. There were certain salons and certain boudoirs which were all-powerful. To offend any friend of the ladies who presided over these houses was to expose oneself to the petty thunderbolts the administrative Jupiters kept in reserve for the service of houses where the dinners were of the best.

The Emperor ignored this despicable conduct, but the deeds were perpetrated in his name, and with the pretext of protecting his régime, therefore history is right to credit him with them. I will illustrate what I have just written by an anecdote which shows the mode of procedure at that time. As I played my part in it I can describe its every detail.

On the 16th March, 1854, I was reading beside my fire when I was informed that a member of the police force wished to speak with me. I ordered the servant to show him in, and I was soon face to face with a polite young man, who said —

"The head of the police force, or *Sûreté Générale*, wishes to have an interview with you."

I replied that I should be prepared to present myself in response to a summons appointing the day and the hour of the interview.

The young man smiled, and rejoined —

“I have a carriage waiting below, and I have orders to bring you as soon as possible.”

The matter was growing serious. I passed my conduct in review, but conscience acquitted me of any guilty action. I did not clearly understand what the expression “*Sûreté Générale*” \* might mean, but it had no agreeable sound, I thought, any more than had the names *Pierre-Encise* or *Pignerol*. It was useless for me to rack my brain. I could not guess the cause of this authoritative summons. To me it seemed an extreme measure to send a carriage to my house in order to fetch me, with a courteous messenger, doubtless, but one who recalled rather too forcibly the emissaries of the Duc de Lavrillière.

I gathered up a packet of letters which I was anxious should escape investigation. My servants, one of whom had been with me from my earliest childhood, were devoted to me. I gave it into their care, and said to them —

“If by six o’clock this evening I have not returned go and inform General X.”

In case of need I took some money with me, and rejoined the messenger, who had waited for me in the study while I was in my bedroom dressing. The chief of the *Sûreté Générale* was called *Collet-Meygret*.

I was brought into his presence, and, as he did not ask me to sit down, I took an armchair.

*Collet-Meygret*, who had an unctuous smile, a patronizing air, and a self-important voice, condescended to say to me —

“It is our desire, sir—in fact, the Government orders that the circumstances which occurred last

\* The detective force became so odious under the Napoleonic dynasty that this euphemism was adopted, and both branches of the police force were thus designated.—TRANS.

night at the Comédie-Française should not be made known to the public."

I bowed.

"You understand?"

"Perfectly. But I do not know what occurred at the Théâtre-Française."

"That is immaterial, sir; the incidents to which I refer may be communicated to you, and I warn you that no allusion to them must appear in the *Revue de Paris*."

"Very good," I replied; "but what are the circumstances?"

"I am not here to enlighten you; I merely wished to give you verbal notice so as to avoid troubling you with an official warning."

"Is that all you have to say to me?"

"Yes, sir."

I withdrew. And what could be the reason for this communication? Did they intend to assassinate the Emperor? Had they laid a mine of gunpowder underneath the Imperial box? Had one of the Ministers of State appeared in a tragic scene as a stage super?

In any case, the facts must be serious. It would be simplest to inquire. I repaired to the office of the Comédie-Française, and there I learnt the truth. I assure my readers that I am not laughing at them.

A Mdle. Lévêque, who called herself Dartès, a tall girl or woman, already lined and thin, and with ungraceful movements, had imagined that she had only to appear before the footlights to supplant Rachel. This Mdle. Dartès had gained some slight notoriety owing to her *liaison* with Charles Ledru, who, after having been the advocate for the prosecution in a civil suit brought against Contrafatto, had striven to rehabilitate this scoundrel, and had been disbarred in consequence. Mdle. Lévêque, commonly called Dartès, and nicknamed Mdme. Ledru, was under the protection of Achille Fould, then one of the Ministers of State. Notwithstand-

ing Arsène Houssaye's objections—he was then Directeur of the Comédie-Française—she had been forced upon the public, and had to be endured. She made her *début* on the 15th of March, 1854, in the tragedy of “Andromaque,” was received with shouts of laughter, and Rachel was not dethroned.

That was the incident it was thought well the public should not know. This Hermione was desirous of hiding her failure, which was due in some degree to the effects of brandy. To this circumstance I owed my acquaintance with M. Collet-Meygret.

On another occasion I was summoned by letter to appear at the small hotel in the Rue de Bellechasse, where the Sûreté Générale held its sittings. In the waiting-room I found several newspaper editors. Not one of us knew why we had been summoned.

Collet-Meygret did not keep us long in suspense.

“Gentlemen,” he began, “the gravity of the demonstration which occurred yesterday at the Musée d’Artillerie must have been apparent to you. It is extremely important that the public should not be informed. The Government recommends journalists to keep silence upon this subject.”

When one of us asked the question, “What demonstration?” Collet-Meygret replied —

“I have nothing more to say to you.”

There was no end to the fanciful suggestions we propounded. By night, after a series of guesses, we came to the conclusion that the evening before, during the Emperor's visit to the Musée d’Artillerie, an officer had grasped Ravailac's knife—at least, the supposed knife—had tried to kill the Emperor, and had only been disarmed by a member of the suite. That evening the whole of Paris was repeating this story, which had not a word of truth in it.

Certainly Napoleon III. had been to the Musée d’Artillerie to examine the models of rifled cannons which were to be adopted in the French army. The



result of the precautions taken by Collet-Meygret was the general diffusion of rumours of plots and of assassination, such as thoroughly alarmed the population of Paris.

It needs a high intelligence to have power and yet not to abuse it, and Collet-Meygret lacked this gift. I do not know whence he came, but I know what was to become of him.

On the whole he was not a bad man, but he fancied himself a strong one, whereas in reality he was only *naïf*.

He had imbibed the writings of Balzac, which he had studied with the greatest care, like many other men of his time. More than one of them dreamt of being Rastignac or Marsay, Vautrin or Lucien de Rubempré. Collet-Meygret believed in these fictions, and he set himself the task of wire-puller to the great ones of the earth, and tried to make capital out of the secrets to which his position gave him access. In his capacity of head of police he had the command of considerable sums of money intended for secret service, and he was only accountable to the Minister.

He did not spare this fund, and used it in the surveillance of the Emperor and Empress, the Princes and Princesses of the Imperial family, and the Ministers. He had possession of the Emperor's private correspondence, and of that of the Empress, among others.

He thought himself impregnable and master of the situation. At a hint of danger, at the first threat, could he not retort —

“Your secret is in my hands; do you dare to depose me from my place?”

It is not for me to tell how, one fine day, all these papers fell into the Emperor's hands.

Collet-Meygret fell. It was found that he could not be made into a consul or a collector of taxes.

The Emperor was swept away by the events of the 4th September, and he was succeeded by the Republic. Collet-Meygret occupied himself with

business speculations and did them no credit. He died after having spent a season at Sainte Pélagie. During a considerable period this man was the grand master—I was about to say, the grand inquisitor—of the daily press under the Empire. He was chary neither of warnings to editors nor of suspending newspapers. In the provinces the prefects tried to follow his good example, and showed their zeal by competing with him. At last the matter grew so scandalous that the Emperor took it up and declared that no repressive measure should be carried out in the future against the daily papers without having been first referred to a council of ministers. This change gave the papers a respite. With the intention of upholding authority those in power had compromised it and made it ridiculous.

When Nadaud wanted to print his song of the two policemen, “Brigadier, vous avez raison,” he was obliged to call it “Pandore,” because the original title would have been prejudicial to the prestige of the army.

The journalists of to-day, to whom every form of violence is allowed, sometimes complain that they are not free enough. Their complaints amuse me when I recall the anecdote of Mdlle. Dartés. The journalists of the Second Empire lived in an atmosphere of threats, and yet they still kept the sacred fire burning.

In antiquity during the games the young men passed a burning torch, which was not to be extinguished, from hand to hand as they ran.

Laurent-Pichat wrote some fine lines on this subject. But in those times the torch was only a little dark lantern, so well guarded, however, that it still glimmered when at length it could be relighted and unveiled.

Those who really love liberty for its own sake can never feel sufficiently grateful to the periodical journalism of that date for having held firm instead of throwing away the pen at the first warning from above.

As I said before, the decree of the 17th February had only a moral effect upon me. It distressed me because in press matters I have never believed in any system except one of absolute liberty. It is enough that the press should be amenable to the ordinary law of the land. A limited press may become a danger, but free and multitudinous it can do no harm. One print is sure to undermine another. Many newspapers destroy the influence of *the* newspaper according to the homœopathic method, *similia similibus*. In a country like France, where opinion is not divided, but as it were pulverized, when thought can have free expression one opinion nullifies the other. The public grows accustomed to abuse and invective, to calumny and lies, and no longer pays any attention.

Among a hundred others I am reminded of two anecdotes which bear upon this point and relate to the reign of Louis-Philippe, that is to say, to a period when a small number of newspapers, subject to restrictions and paying heavy indemnities, exercised their influence upon the public mind. I venture to give them here.

The Duc d'Aumale was then following the curriculum of the Collège Henri IV., and in order to excite his spirit of emulation he was set to write compositions with the ablest pupils of other schools. A pupil of the Collège Louis-le-Grand, called Auguste Prus, afterwards Consul at Erzeroum and at Santandes, was first in one of these competitions. He was invited to lunch at the Tuilleries. Afterwards, in the company of the Duc d'Aumale and other boys of the same age, he was taken to drive in the forest of Saint Germain in a drag. Auguste Prus was delicate; he took a cold which turned to inflammation of the lungs. One of the opposition papers asserted that through jealousy at his having surpassed the King's son in his studies a noxious drink had been given to the "jeune laureat."

The story produced a sensation, was spread

abroad and talked over. Now no one remembers it except, perhaps, the hero of the adventure, who laughed when he told it me.

The *Charivari* newspaper, which was indefatigable in leading the opposition to the Government, contained always a number of "entrefilets" (short paragraphs) inserted at the end of the paper. When the moment for going to press had come, and the newspaper was some few lines short of the prescribed length, the printer's overseer would announce the fact to those of the editorial staff who might be present, and these set to work at once to invent sensational paragraphs. Laurent-Jan, who was like a wolf with the poisoned tooth of a viper, and who then wrote for the *Charivari*, said to me —

"When we ran short of copy, and could not find one unpublished calumny at the end of our pen, we invariably wrote a paragraph about Maréchal Bugeaud. We called him a thief, although we knew him to be the most honest man in France."

For ten years the *Charivari* dished up the old story about the Algerian coins the Maréchal had pocketed, but no one believed it ever.

My own opinion is that newspapers are credited with being able to exert much more influence than is really the case. How many newspaper articles have left any lasting trace upon men's minds?

In July, 1830, upon the promulgation of the ordinances, Etienne Becquet exclaimed, "Unhappy France! Unhappy King!" Then in March, 1848, there was the saying of Emile de Girardin, "Confiance! Confiance!" So of all the thousands of articles published in the last fifty years one's memory retains only a sentence, or a name or a title.

The newspaper of to-day is forgotten to-morrow. *Verba volant*. Let the words fly then and destroy one another by reason of their very number. I shall be blamed for not being practical, but I do not pretend that I am so. The politicians of the

*Restauration* were doubtless practical men. We know what they made of the Press. They bring us down to 1830. Then Louis-Philippe, who considered himself above all things a practical man, adopted the Press regulations of September, 1835, which M. Thiers had invented, and those regulations were to continue in force until 1843. After the June insurrection General Cavaignac wanted to gag the press, but his fall followed upon the plebiscite of the 10th December, and likewise that of the others, who were far from being lenient to the newspapers.

Surely Napoleon III. in 1870, Thiers in 1873, and Marshal MacMahon in 1878 were all practical men, and yet the newspapers neither hastened nor hindered their downfall.

Those Governments which have employed repression in dealing with journalism have suffered shipwreck, and those which have allowed perfect freedom of the Press have also foundered. The influence the Press exerts on the Government of a country is *nil*. The journalists ridicule the ministers and rouse the official world out of its torpor, which does no great harm to anyone. If it libels respectable people there is no reason why respectable people should heed it. Age and experience have only strengthened me in this view of the question, and if I had to draft a set of Press regulations they would be quickly written out:—"Regulation No. I.—Periodical literature to be free. Regulation No. II.—Any individual who in time of war shall publish information respecting the movements of the French army will be regarded as a spy and shot."

The decree of the 17th February was framed only against political journalism, but indirectly it reached and ruined many writers who wrote artistic and dramatic criticism, novels, or scientific articles for the newspapers. Many of these had been officially suppressed after the *coup d'état*. Even in Paris, that vast organism thirsting for

news and eager to read, was restricted to thirteen newspapers.\*

It was then that journals entirely devoted to the treatment of liberty subjects first appeared in which writers could see their productions published and try to gain their bread. A good many small periodicals which were occupied solely with art, science, and literature did not succeed in keeping alive, for the boundary which separates the political from the social world is so ill-defined that a writer was in danger of being accused of having set foot on forbidden ground if he wrote about a museum regulated by the administrative body of the Comédie-Française under the authority of the Minister of Public Instruction, or of Bicêtre, which is controlled by the Prefecture of the Seine. In such cases guilty persons could be brought before the Police Correctionnelle. A small fine only was imposed, but the paper was suppressed.

The number of unpretending journals which disappeared in this way was considerable. Those were hard times. Gérard de Nerval, who was not a rebel, once observed to me —

“I should like to write the history of Haçan-ben-Sabah-Homairi, the old man of the mountain, but I do not dare; they would discover allusions to the Emperor.”

The members of the administrative police exercised their ingenuity chiefly upon this point, of allusion, in all its forms. Those hapless writers who were so ill-advised as to touch upon Roman history soon became aware of this circumstance. Such productions as were in any real sense literary, either because they stimulated the imagination or were occupied with criticism, sought a refuge in

\* I take the year 1854 as the middle period of the empire. The names of the Paris newspapers which had authority to write about politics were the *Débats*, the *Siècle*, the *Presse*, the *Pays*, the *Constitutionnel*, the *Patrie*, *l'Union*, *La Gazette de France*, *l'Assemblée Nationale*, *l'Univers*, *la Vérité*, and the *Charivari*. This is without counting the *Moniteur*, the official organ.

those journals which the storm had not swept away. A little more, and even literature would have disappeared.

During a conversation with Hyppolyte Fortoul, Sainte-Beuve had said, "Some form of official literature is necessary." The advice was very near being accepted, for the Government had imagined to start a periodical which should rival those already existing, and as the money resources it would be able to command would naturally be in excess of any ordinary editor's funds, such rivalry would be formidable. It was proposed that the *Moniteur Universel*, then the official organ, should be entirely transformed. The project was a source of pain to me, because, with his accustomed confidence in others, Louis de Cormenin took part in it without being aware of the proposed end or of the probable result.

M. Fould, Minister of State, had invented this ungenerous scheme, aided by advice from one of his intimates, who was president of the Court of Exchequer, and afterwards died mad. The *Moniteur*—the old *Moniteur*, as it was called—was the same as the *Gazette Nationale*, founded in 1789, to publish the deliberations of the States General in full detail. It had become the official organ, the mouth-piece of the different Governments which had succeeded one another in France. It could only have the politics of the ruler, and so independent judgment was not permitted it.

The official procedure of the authority then in power was published in it, and any important public events. When there was a Parliament, and when debates were allowed in it, the speeches were reported *in extenso*. In another part of the paper there were dramatic criticisms, with some account of the *séances* at the Institute; occasionally some archæological information or a report by a savant of some mission would be given. It was a colourless, depressing kind of production, which exactly fulfilled its purpose.

The staff was composed of old, worn-out men of letters, of scholarless pedagogues, and unemployed literati. No novel or short story had ever appeared in its pages. At rare intervals some poem, written to order, on the occasion of a victory, the birth of an heir to the throne, or the marriage of a sovereign, would represent literature for its readers. The contributors to this publication were remunerated according to a fixed rate. It was like receiving a pension in disguise. That did not signify; it would have been well had matters continued thus, especially at a time when such newspapers as had survived the *coup d'état* were forced, in order to impart a little interest to their articles, to call in the help of literature. All political discussion was forbidden; it would have meant the extinction of the paper.

M. Fould, however, undertook to reorganize the *Moniteur*. His design was to make of it the most important and interesting of French newspapers. Did he succeed in carrying out his object?

It was not difficult to bring in fresh blood and to rejuvenate the rather antiquated staff, to increase the number of pages, to select the most popular and skilled contributors in their own kind for literary, dramatic, and artistic criticism. Famous novel-writers could be asked to contribute stories, well-known savants could be induced to report the transactions of the Académie des Sciences, those of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres, and those of the Académie des Sciences, Morales et Politiques. The coffers of the State were opened freely.

What were the contents of the other papers? They consisted chiefly of general information upon the events of the day and of literary articles. Now as the *Moniteur* surpassed them all in the matter of general information, because it was, in fact, the source whence they drew their knowledge of the facts of the day, it followed, of necessity, that if as well it took in the department of the higher literature, there would be no further *raison d'être* for the other journals.



The *Moniteur*, free from threats, from stamp duties, and from the cost of postage, was already in an advantageous position. But to enter into competition in the sphere of literature with newspapers, subject upon the most trifling pretext to cautions, suspension, and suppression, was to make an excessive use of supreme authority.

That was my opinion at the time, and I have seen no reason to change it since.

When Louis de Cormenin came to tell me of the project, of this transformed *Moniteur*, and that he was offered the post of editor, I started with astonishment.

"You have not accepted?"

"Why not?" he replied, quietly.

Never did such a torrent of expostulation, of arguments, good and bad, break from my lips.

"What!" I exclaimed, "the Government is going to gather round the banner of the official organ all the flower of literary excellence, of the men of letters, and, through their instrumentality, becomes the literary, artistic, and dramatic critic, novelist, poet! It is absurd!"

"The Government can command the services of these men, pay them liberally, the men who have made the life and the fortune of those journals which have been allowed to survive. This will be their sentence of death. It will be a means to rob them of all the talent they possess, and the Government will trick itself out in their borrowed plumes. It assumes the right to confiscate the property of others, the right to levy a tax upon other men's brains. They want to monopolise literature as they have monopolised tobacco, to manufacture letters as they manufacture cigars, without the same excuse, an exchequer to fill. Most newspapers subsist with the greatest difficulty upon their subscribers' payments and upon the proceeds of the advertisements which appear in their columns. The editor of the *Moniteur* will only have to dip his hands in public funds to outbid the others. You cannot associate yourself with such an undertaking."

Louis listened with that immovable patience of his which always conquered me in the end. He shook his head and merely replied, "I think you exaggerate."

Still more moved I continued, "Do not misunderstand me; I do not blame you for accepting a post dependent upon the will of the Government. Governments are made to be served, and if you like to serve this present one I see no reason to object. You are well gifted, you bear a name and will inherit a fortune, which should ensure your success in any career. If you care to enter public life, serve under any ministry you fancy, I am sure to approve; but among all the possible openings which may present themselves, and which you are likely to accept, one only is of a nature to prejudice the literary cause—it is that which has been offered you and that which you are about to accept!"

I was much affected. The best of reasons crowded to my lips, but, as always in such cases, I expressed myself ill, and I felt that I could not succeed in imparting to Louis my own strong conviction. Although Louis was accustomed to my excitability he seemed staggered by my violence, and he answered nothing. I said —

"Your father has been a deputy and a *conseiller d'état*, yet, but for letters, he would scarcely have been known. Had he not written his pamphlets and his 'Orateurs Parlementaires,' his name would have been ignored, or at least forgotten. If we are ever heard of it will be thanks to literature; we are therefore bound to have some sort of professional feeling. We should shrink with horror from whatever strikes a blow at literature, because it will be weakened by any such cause, nor should we submit to any measure which might injure it, still less can we join in such an undertaking without a failure of principle."

Louis began to protest. "But why should I injure literature by accepting the post of editor-in-chief to the *Moniteur*?"

I stamped my foot, and if it is true that oaths open the gates of hell, I think the gates of paradise must have been closed against me then.

"Because," I replied, "you will appropriate to the use of your *Moniteur*, confound it, the talent of men who have still kept a remnant of life in the other journals."

"But," said Louis, "the Government has surely a right to have its organ?"

I rejoined, "Yes, certainly! And the best proof of it is that it has its own organ of the right kind. When the Press is free the Government has a right to have whatever suits it in the pages of its newspaper, but at the present time, when nine-tenths of the newspapers have been struck with death, and when all discussion is forbidden to those which remain, it is otherwise. Now they are only able to exist with difficulty as literary organs, for the most part; it will be a crime on the part of the Government to enter into competition with them, into a competition in which the official newspaper will be safe to win. It must, however, be a shameless and injurious rivalry, for it will mean that the *Moniteur* rests upon a financial basis such as no ordinary journal ever possessed. He who in a game of cards plays after having picked out all the trumps for his own hand is sure to win, but he has committed a dishonourable action."

It was useless for us to discuss the question, we were unable to understand one another.

Louis consulted his father, who said to him, "You know what Maxime is like; his is an exceptional character and it is impossible to agree with him." Without being convinced, however, Louis was shaken. He questioned several literary men among his acquaintances and listened to their different opinions. One of them asked, "What is the *Moniteur* going to pay the line?" Some of them observed, "It is very fine for your friend to talk, easy to be Spartan when one has a fixed income." Another who coveted Gautier's position on the

staff of the newspaper *La Presse* broke out in admiration, "It is a splendid idea! Instead of injuring literature as Du Camp imagines it will, the Government has undertaken to protect literature."

We held a final *séance* at M. de Cormanin's house, at which Théophile Gautier was present. The discussion opened at ten o'clock in the morning and closed at four in the afternoon. I was exhausted when it was over; I had eaten nothing since the previous evening, my nerves were shaken, and I had the feeling that tears were not far off. Louis said to me, "I do not agree with you, but I will not go against your wishes; nothing shall come between us and our friendship." That was the way to conquer me, and I yielded. I took both his hands. "Do as you will then. As I have not been able to convince you, try the experiment; I give you six months only before you are thoroughly disgusted with the business you are about to engage in." I have often heard it said that Théophile Gautier was wanting in feeling. He was crying with his face buried in a cushion. We went down the stairs without a word, and we walked along the Avenue Gabriel for some time in silence. Suddenly Gautier turned to me and said, "After all, you know, you are in the right. After the February decree, we who live by our pen ought to have left Paris, begged our way through France, and gone to Geneva, which we should have made into the capital of literature just as Calvin made it into the capital of the reformed religion. But our Father which is in heaven does not give us our daily bread, and so we have to stay where the larder is provisioned. The difference between Emile de Girardin, who now pays me, and the State, which is about to pay me, is infinitesimal. What is the use of making a wry mouth over it? All the same, Max, you love letters, and therefore much shall be forgiven unto you."

Louis de Cormanin accepted the post of chief editor of the *Moniteur*. At the outset he was unfortunate. In a description of a gala performance

which was given at the opera-house he named among the personages present King Jérôme. King Jérôme, indeed! And had the Treaty of Vienna been cancelled? Such a title applied to a deposed prince in the *Moniteur*, in the official journal, was a grave matter, and Europe awoke.

Diplomatic circles began to look to their weapons. The Minister of Foreign Affairs had to furnish explanations. Louis was reproved by the Minister, and had to promise to be more careful in the future. I had not retired from the charge, and had not as yet accepted my defeat.

I wrote Louis a letter in which I told him plainly that as the Government had assumed the duties of literary editor it ought, at least, to reserve its pages for young authors and beginners. They ought to be given an opportunity of exercising their talents, as the limited number of other papers gave them so few openings. Louis de Cormenin copied my letter and submitted it to M. Fould, who replied, "I will have only well-known names, such as are already acceptable to the public."

The incident I have just related, under the pressure of feelings which still overpower me when I recall its details, occurred in November, 1852, at the very moment when the decennial presidency was about, should the people give their consent, to become an hereditary empire.

On the 14th July, 1853, Louis de Cormenin wrote to me, "Illuminate your windows if you like. You were right. I have just tendered my resignation to the Minister. On Monday I leave the Rue des Poitevins, but I shall be there till then." Louis had, in fact, discovered for himself that I had not been mistaken. The addition to the size of the *Moniteur*, due to the insertion of a novel in daily parts besides other fresh matter, had imperilled the existence of other papers by which a number of writers gained a livelihood. As de Cormenin was a man of irreproachable honour he came to the conclusion that my misgivings had been well-founded,

and retired from the editorship. He went himself to M. Fould with the letter containing his resignation, and explained to him that an editor-in-chief was not required at the offices of the *Moniteur*. A sub-editor to carry on the work of the paper would suffice. M. Fould took Louis de Cormenin's hint and did not replace him. Two years later I wished to know what effect the transformation of the *Moniteur Officiel* had produced upon the other newspapers. With respect to three of them, which were then called, for want of a better word, opposition papers, I was enabled to procure accurate information. About a third of the subscribers had fallen off, and as the number of advertisements is in exact proportion to that of the subscribers this source of income had also diminished. The loss, which had to be made up in some way, naturally fell upon the staff, that is to say, upon the writers; they received a lower rate of payment.

The decree of the 17th February exercised a pernicious influence upon the more abstract forms of literature. It was necessary that the papers should stimulate the interest of their readers in one way or another. All political discussion, any criticism of official or administrative acts was of necessity laid aside. The only resource which remained to editors who wished to interest their public was to violate the sacredness of private life, and under a slight disguise to relate all the scandalous incidents certain to abound in such a city as Paris.

The Comte de Morny was partly responsible for this state of things. On a certain evening one of the Ministers complained in his presence that an anecdote which should have remained secret had been spread abroad.

"Bah!" he replied. "They may say what they like as long as they don't talk politics. So much the worse for those whose masks are torn off!"

Then it was that the daily press changed its character, and adopted the indiscreet tone it has never since abandoned. Reporters were busy in all

directions collecting information, and closed doors could not ensure secrecy.

Weekly critiques of the drama, which formerly satisfied men's interest in the stage, now took a second place. At the theatres personal talk supplanted the observation of the works represented. Every day green-room gossip was accorded the honours of a special article. The public knew where *Mdlle. X.* or *Mme. W.* had her dresses made, and who paid the bill. As a rule this sort of gossip has no real importance, and does but little damage. The fact is that the majority of those discussed in the public prints are delighted to find themselves being talked about. I could name a lady who gives parties at her house, and pays a fixed sum to a newspaper that it may devote a paragraph to her balls.

But there is an evil of a different kind to which I will allude. The young men who spend their time going from house to house in the day time, so as in the evening to write an article full of the "latest information," are usually men of talent who have been tempted to forsake letters by the regular remuneration offered them for this kind of work.

A writer who has produced a thousand leaderettes of drawing-room gossip in ten years, and is weary of the trade, might have written two or three good novels in the time, or one or two volumes of poems, which would have been an addition to literature. I knew a poet who should have risen to fame. He spent his life writing frivolous articles for an aggressive paper. When reading his sparkling, brilliant articles, which delight men of refined taste, and are so full of fire, but which have left no permanent impression, how often have I not been reminded of *Lucien Rubempré* in the "*Grand Homme de Province à Paris*," and regretted the talent frittered away so recklessly upon ephemeral productions, whereas he might have shone with a steady and enduring light had he concentrated his thought in a book! Those who withstood a similar temptation,

and ran the chances of book publication when the newspapers were open to them, proved that they had a true vocation, and should have their meed of praise. By-and-bye the history of literature under the Second Empire will be written. Then if the verdict is that its character was somewhat senile and uncertain, too much influenced by Victor Hugo and by Balzac—in short, that it was without originality, the reason is to be found in the decree of the 17th February, which was aimed directly at letters, and had a paralyzing effect upon them.

From this time, too, dates the appearance of a new form of literature, which had not been represented previously, except upon posters, and in advertisements and prospectuses. I know the term literature applied to such things is unsuitable, but there is none other in use to describe printed and published matter. Bourse transactions began to assume considerable importance. All the energy which no longer found employment in politics was diverted to money speculations and to industrial pursuits.

The financial press came into existence to meet this new development of the moneyed interest, and special journals were devoted to giving it publicity. Numerous speculations were started in a very daring spirit, and to propagate and maintain these, marvelously cheap newspapers, which cost more to produce than their sale could possibly reimburse, were floated. Nevertheless, such papers bring in a sure return, because they tempt their subscribers to invest in undertakings from which the inventors of this kind of prose know how to extract a heavy profit. Men of letters now often left novels and criticism on one side to devote their gifts to these manufactured articles which imposed upon the simple public. They were paid either in solid coin or by means of shares they could negotiate on the Bourse.

This literature, concerned with money affairs and financial trickery, first arose during the Second



Empire. It has now assumed such proportions that it is impossible to count the newspapers entirely devoted to its circulation.

Like other serious periodicals the *Revue de Paris* was not assailed by these temptations. We rested beneath our literary tent, and no excuse could induce us to leave it. We did our best, for both Laurent-Pichat and I were full of good intentions. We were aware that writers began to grow weary of knocking in vain at the few doors which were still open to them.

We did not shrink from bringing out the periodical in twenty-four parts instead of in twelve, so as to be able to offer a wider, if more costly, hospitality. We had remained faithful to our principles; we regarded the review as the stage upon which beginners could make their first appearance, and welcomed young blood by preference. Whenever we found it feasible to bring out an unknown writer's first production we rejoiced. We had stipulated that poetry should never be banished from our literary hostelry; each number contained some verse, and many a writer who has since risen to fame sang his first notes beside us. Moreover as soon as a poem had seen the light it was certain to be brought to us, though we frequently thought it scarcely worth baptizing.

In my editorial capacity I had opportunities of observing the false estimate men form of themselves, and of measuring the insatiable vanity which consumes them. The less their real talent the more susceptible they are, and they feel injured when no one scatters incense before them. The spectacle is a painful one, but it has its uses. It should keep us humble. I have preserved a few of the letters which were written to me by poor, self-infatuated young men, whose progress in life I have watched. One of them to whom I had written in a weak moment, "We are willing to help you to make your mark," replied, "I do not want to make my mark, sir; I want to erect a monument."

Another wrote: "Let me tell you that the boy of twenty, who addresses you, is at once an artist, an actor, a painter, a poet, a philosopher, and a student of economic questions. Let me inform you that the part I desire to play in life is that of a Socrates or of a Christ. I must give the world a belief."

A third made me the following proposals —

"I can provide you with the materials needed for your publication, with what will ensure its success. I can furnish a novel or a poem, a critical notice, a philosophical or historical essay, a social article, or an artistic or literary monograph—I am encyclopædic and inexhaustible. To begin with I beg you to set apart for me forty-eight pages in each number. I shall come and talk to you about it. I have nothing prepared as yet, but it only takes me a week to turn out a volume."

That individual did not talk to me, for I was warned by his letter. I know what was his end. He wallowed in the mud of the Commune and it choked him.

Nothing ever daunts these poor creatures, or has power to turn them aside from the path of literature along which they stumble at every step. Another's fame seems a personal injury to themselves. They accuse their fellow creatures and fate, but they never lay the blame at their own door. That is quite natural. The vocation of a man who is devoid of talent is more aggressive, noisy, and intolerant than that of a man of genius; it is thoroughly morbid, and founded upon a mistaken idea, the most tenacious thing in the world.

Sometimes these men forsake a good trade, by which they might gain their living, to take up letters and die of hunger like that Dr. Aussandon I once knew. He neglected his patients that he might write, and would apply wet bandages to his forehead for the sake of having ideas. Want came to him, but not ideas, and Dr. Aussandon shot himself in the heart. Such beings as those were impotent

and vain madmen, but on the other hand how many men there were who won my affection and sympathy. How many, possessed of courage, originality, and skill, might well have believed that the future was open before them, but death was to close their career. The living are there to testify to their own worth in the province of letters, but who is there left to speak of the dead except myself, who knew and loved them? I see their wraiths pass before me, they seem to beckon me, for they know that I have not forgotten them. It was but yesterday, and yet it is so far off. Wrapped in the darkness as in a gloomy shroud their semblance takes vague form and memory fills in the details. In vain I try to make them live again; I know that I am only watching a procession of ghosts.

## CHAPTER III.

### GHOSTS.

ONE evening at Constantinople, in the month of November, 1850, at the palace of the French Embassy, General Aupick, then our Ambassador, said to me after dinner—

“Has any new recruit been added to the ranks of literature since you left Paris?”

I spoke to the General of the “*Vie de Bohême*,” by Henri Mürger, which had been recently adapted for the stage and had had a success at the Variétés. I added—

“A few days ago I received a letter from Louis de Cormenin, in which he writes:—‘At Gautier’s lately I met a certain Baudelaire, who will be heard of some day. His originality may be a little too self-conscious, but his verse gives no uncertain sound. He has the poetic temperament, a rare thing in these times.’”

As soon as I pronounced the name of Baudelaire Madame Aupick hung her head, the General fixed me with his eye as if he had just accepted a challenge, and Colonel Margadel touched my foot as if to warn me that I was on dangerous ground. I felt rather foolish, and understood that I had blundered, but knew not how. Ten minutes later, when General Aupick was discussing some book of Proudhon’s, Madame Aupick approached me, and said, in a low voice—

“He has talent, has he not?”

“Who?”

"Why, the young man M. Louis de Cormenin praised in his letter."

Without speaking I replied by an affirmative sign, but I was more in the dark than ever.

Colonel Margadel took leave at the same time as ourselves, and led us to the apartment he occupied in the palace of the Embassy, where he showed us his fine collection of lepidoptera.

"By Jove!" he said, "you very nearly caused an explosion by talking of Charles Baudelaire-Dufaÿs. He is Madame Aupick's son. The General and he have often nearly come to blows, and the General does not allow his name to be mentioned in his presence. I have warned you now; do not repeat the mistake."

Then, while we admired his vulcans, his argus-eyed butterflies, and his Apollos, Colonel Margadel explained to us that General Aupick and Baudelaire had quarrelled beyond all hope of reconciliation.

Madame Baudelaire was a widow when General Aupick had married her, and her son Charles a boy of about fourteen years of age. The General had then attained to the rank of Colonel, and commanded the staff at Lyons. The boy was placed at school, where he rebelled against all discipline. He had been deeply incensed by his mother's marriage, and from the first day he set himself in opposition to his step-father. Madame Aupick spoilt her son, and the General was severe with him. General Aupick was a kind man and an intelligent one, but discipline of the most inflexible description seemed to him the only treatment for men and boys. He was a soldier, and when he had shouted "Right wheel!" it was useless to try to turn to the left. Unintentionally he had summed up his whole character upon the coat-of-arms he had devised by himself: a sword, Az., or, pale, with this motto, "Tout par elle!" To attempt to coerce Baudelaire with a sword and by military rule was like trying to catch flies with vinegar.

That dreamy, lawless, defiant nature needed very

tender treatment, and the kind of affection which is wise enough to know how to gain influence through the heart. He could be bent, but not broken. The conflict between the step-father and the step-son became chronic, and so violent that Madame Aupick, a weak woman, who loved both her husband and her child, sighed, tried to calm the one, to appease the other, failed with both, and was in a state of despair.

One day General Aupick gave an official dinner. He had gathered round his table several magistrates, officers of high rank, and other persons of importance. Baudelaire, then seventeen years of age, was present at this dinner. In the course of conversation it happened that Baudelaire made some impudent remark. No doubt Colonel Aupick reproved him sternly. Baudelaire listened to the lecture, then left the table and planted himself near his step-father, whom he addressed in the following terms :—

“ You try to humiliate me before people in your own rank of life, who mistake your folly for wit, and think themselves bound out of politeness to laugh at your jokes. You forget that I bear a name your wife should never have exchanged, but which it is my duty to see respected. You have failed to show me proper respect. That, sir, calls for correction, and I will do myself the honour of throttling you.”

He then threw himself upon Colonel Aupick and took him by the throat. The Colonel freed himself and boxed Baudelaire's ears. Baudelaire fell down in a sort of fit, and was carried out of the room by the servants. He was placed under arrest in his bedroom, and forbidden to go out. This imprisonment lasted a fortnight, at the end of which time he was sent to Bordeaux by *diligence* in an officer's charge. There he was put on board a vessel bound for India. His passage was prepaid. He was provided with a small sum of ready money and with a collection of odds and ends and trumpery objects for trading purposes. He touched at the Isle of

Bourbon and at the Mauritius, and finally landed in India. His collection of trumpery soon disappeared.

He took to supplying the English army with cattle. I do not know where or how he managed to live. His mother would now and then send him money by hand, while he amused himself in writing verses riding upon the backs of elephants.\* At his age the memory is retentive; he learnt English, and that was the one advantage he gained from these travels, which he did not care to recall. I believe he spent some time at the Cape of Good Hope, where he fell in with a negress or quadroon, who hung about his path for many years —

“Avec ses vêtements on doyants et nacrés,  
Même quand elle marche on croirait qu’elle danse,  
Comme ces longs serpents que les jongleurs sacrés,  
Au bouts de leurs bâton agitent en cadence.”

Some lines addressed to this woman, whom he calls “La grande taciturne,” are not suitable for quotation here, but should be read. The poem is fine, and is called “Sed non Satiata.” Once or twice he spoke to me of this “black fairy” with an emotion which proved that he was sincerely attached to her.

When Baudelaire returned to France he had attained his majority, and the share of his father’s property which came to him by right was placed in his hands. It was soon disposed of. He passed through a period of luxurious extravagance, during which he bore himself with a kind of ill-bred affectation; his conduct attracted a good deal of attention. At that time his mother was living in Paris with Colonel Aupick, who had been appointed to command the staff of the First Division. She endeavoured to give her son some introductions which might be of use to him. With this idea in view she took him with her to some of the official receptions.

\* I have been told that this anecdote is of doubtful authenticity. I had it from Baudelaire, whose veracity I have no reason to doubt, but his imagination may have carried him away.

There he distinguished himself by behaving in an extremely original manner.

Madame X., by right of her position and her birth, received not only the official world, but also fashionable society. One day in her drawing-room the Duc de D. said —

“Of all created beings woman is the most charming.”

“Monsieur le Duc,” retorted Baudelaire, “I cannot agree with you. Women are creatures who should be kept shut up, be beaten, and well fed.”

It is easy to understand that he was not much sought after.

Boudelaire himself was not at his ease in circles which accepted his favourite paradoxes with the smiling silence courtesy and custom enjoin. He preferred *cafés* and smoking-places, where he fell in with the whole of the contemporary great men of the future. Among poets, journalists, painters, sculptors, composers of music he declaimed his unpublished verses, and the praise they gave him was like an intoxication. Before having published anything, he thus became famous in a certain set, and was already of some importance.

Some of his poems, such as “*Le Reniement de Saint Pierre*,” “*Le voyage à Cythère*,” “*La Charogne*,” went the round of the studios and of the offices where they published the smaller journals, and became famous. Someone had repeated “*Le Reniement de Saint Pierre*” in my presence, and I had been much struck by its elevated strain of thought and by the coarseness of the language. The man who had written that was no ordinary man. The verses were from the pen of a master—they were rough, but powerful. I spoke of them to Théophile Gautier, who replied, “I am afraid that what happened to Petrus Borel will also happen to Baudelaire. When we were quite young, when the Romantic School was in its first ardour, and I went about in a crimson satin doublet, we used to say, ‘Hugo must look to his laurels. As soon as Petrus



begins to publish, he will disappear from the scene.' Well, Petrus, the madman, began to publish, and Père Hugo did not disappear. Now we are threatened with Baudelaire, we are told that when his poems are produced Musset, Laprade, and I will disappear in smoke. I do not believe a word of it. Their Baudelaire will hang fire like their Petrus."

Gautier was mistaken; Baudelaire did not hang fire. He did not dethrone the author of "Rolla" or of "Psyché," nor the author of the "Comédie de la Mort;" he advanced side by side with them, only on a lower plane. In the history of the literature of our time he must be given his own place.

I made his acquaintance during the summer of 1852. I was living at Neuilly in a small villa I had hired for the season. Baudelaire came to see me there. I regarded him with all the more curiosity because I had often heard him discussed, and because of his strange appearance. Though extremely clean and neat, his clothes were of coarse material and of country make. His shirt was of rough, unbleached linen, and under the collar he had tied a bright handkerchief. A greyish coat, which hung upon him like a sack, was fastened with enormous bronzed buttons. Above his hunting shoes, which were resplendent with blacking, appeared bright blue stockings.

His gloveless hands showed nails pressed down at the tips as if by a machine, and he moved them about in a slow and affected way. As for the head, it was that of a young devil turned hermit. His hair was cut very short, and he was clean shaven. The eyes were small, bright and restless, and reddish rather than brown in colour; the nose was sensual in type, and thick at the end; the thin-lipped mouth smiled but rarely, and was almost always tightly closed; the chin was square, and the ears stood out from the head. At first the general effect was most unpleasing, but wore off after a time. Baudelaire's voice was very forced, like that of a man who is picking his phrases, and likes to hear himself speak.

He was of middle height, and squarely built, with the appearance of great muscular strength, and at the same time he had a spent and enervated air which suggested weakness and a want of self-control.

In spite of the reserve natural to strangers meeting for the first time, our interview was cordial. The conversation began in a strange way. Baudelaire said —

“Sir, I am thirsty.”

I offered him beer, grog, tea. He replied —

“Thank you, sir, I only drink wine.”

I gave him his choice of claret or Burgundy.

“Sir, if you will allow me, I will drink some of each.”

Two bottles were brought, a glass and a water-bottle.

“Sir, will you have that water-bottle taken away? The sight of water is disagreeable to me.”

During the two hours we sat and talked he emptied the bottles of wine by tumblers’ full, slowly, like a carter. As I saw that he watched me secretly to see what impression he was making, I would not gratify him by showing surprise.

His really original character would have been more interesting had he not made such obvious efforts to call attention to it.

One Sunday, the day my friends are kind enough to visit me, long after our first interview, he came to see me with his hair painted green. I pretended not to notice it.

He stood and looked at himself in front of the mirror, stroked his hair with his hand, and did his best to attract my attention. At last, unable any longer to control himself, he said —

“Do you see nothing extraordinary in my appearance?”

“No!”

“But my hair is dyed green, and that is unusual.”

I answered —

"Everybody's hair is more or less green; now, if your hair were sky-blue I might be astonished perhaps. But one may see green hair under many a hat in Paris."

He took his departure very soon afterwards, and, meeting a friend of mine in the courtyard, he said to him —

"I recommend you not to go and see Ducamp to-day; he is in a vile temper."

In spite of this frivolity of his we were very good friends, and always met one another with pleasure.

The irregular life he led, however, caused these meetings to take place at very long intervals.

During the whole time I knew him he was in money straits; lived in furnished apartments on credit, and tried to escape from his creditors, who were numerous, for he never borrowed more than a small sum at a time. He always imagined that he was going to work, but had not the resolution to begin. I cannot tell what drove him forth and caused him to wander from one suburban tavern to another.

He reckoned that by working so many hours a day he would be able to produce a given number of lines, and earn a certain sum of money. Thus he calculated that he would be able to clear off his debts in two months, and live a quiet life. Unfortunately he never got beyond the calculation, and always deferred the execution of his project till the morrow.

After his death and that of his mother his creditors acted in a very disinterested manner. His irregular life and the anxieties which must often have tormented him did not detract in any way from his gifts, which were very remarkable, and have left their trace. As a poet, it may be admitted that if his lyre had but one string he played upon it with no ordinary skill. His translation of the works of Edgar Allan Poe is a *chef-d'œuvre* of accuracy. He had completely assimilated his author's writings, and was the first to introduce them to French

readers. The chronic unrest which tortured him, the troubled state of his mind, his insatiable longings and bitter disappointments found their echo in the morbid fancies and alcoholic visions of the American poet. Baudelaire had chosen this frantic dreamer, whose nerves were excited by indulgence in gin, and who founded his ravings upon a scientific basis, to be the intellectual companion of his life. Again, when he wrote "*Les Paradis Artificiels*" he was like a physician looking for a remedy to cure a disease which is incurable, namely, the evil of an ill-regulated life.

Baudelaire was unaware that as a writer he had one great defect, he was ignorant. What he knew he knew well, but his knowledge was limited. History, archæology, philosophy, physiology were foreign to him; as a matter of fact he had never studied them. He had visited the colonies, South Africa, and the East Indies, but had gained nothing by his travels.

It seemed as if in each place he had kept his eyes shut. Only one of his poems, "*l'Albatros*," testifies to his having ever left the chimney corner, or gone over the sea. He was what the Germans call a subjective poet, self-absorbed and self-sufficing, and needed nothing outside of his own personality. His own ideas, his thoughts and fancies, I was about to say his own ravings, were what he loved; the outer world interested him but little. He may have been aware of its existence, but certainly he never observed it carefully.

If occasionally he deigned to give it his attention his sole object in doing so was that he might discover and expose the vices of society in order the better to despise human nature. The man who contrives to despise human nature is always tempted to esteem himself too highly, and I fear that this was the case with Baudelaire, who prided himself upon his eccentricity.

He asks in his "*Héautontimorouménos*," "Am I not a false chord in the divine symphony?"

Had he said the false chord was of his own invention the expression would have been more accurate. The more he dreamed of impossibilities the more monotonous did his life appear. Gladly would he have exclaimed with Heinrich Heine, "Oh! Give me the spectacle of great vices, of great and sanguinary crimes! Spare me the contemplation of well-padded virtues and of a morality which pays up everything to date!"

When the *Revue des Deux Mondes* published the "Fleurs du Mal" in the first June number, 1855, there was an outburst of astonishment. It was a complete success. Baudelaire's skilful composition and the sonorous vigour of his verse were greatly admired, but more than one reader was shocked by the crudity of his ideas. People were accustomed only to find in French poetry gentle, tender, and melancholy fancies.

Usually poet's jeremiads melted into cloudy mists of indefinite sorrow, of vague lamentations and confused hopes. The "Fleurs du Mal" were of another order. The poet had dissected his own moral diseases, and if he discovered a morbid growth he displayed his ingenuity in forcing it upon the attention of him whom he designated, "Hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère." The book, as is the case with every exceptional publication, produced a great sensation. Baudelaire tried to keep calm amid the plaudits and the hisses. The critics could not come to any agreement.

"At last!" exclaimed some of them. "Alas!" groaned the others. The Government intervened and settled the question.

As soon as the poems were published in book form the volume was denounced to the Police Correctionnelle as an outrage committed against public morality. It seems to me as if I must have dreamt what I am now writing. In Baudelaire's poems there was nothing, positively nothing, which could injure public morality. The ideas might seem strange, the expressions hard and cynical, but the

verses contained no studied impropriety, no brutal coarseness, no summons to the path of debauchery. Their only crime consisted in this, that they had not been cast in a vulgar mould, and that the ideas sometimes offended against received opinion. In literary matters Governments have ever been wanting in intelligence. There is a Suabian proverb which says if stupidity were a source of suffering many people would be uttering cries of pain.

On this occasion the Government blundered more hopelessly than usual. Baudelaire spoke to me of this prosecution, and said —

“It is a piece of good fortune. I had never hoped for such a famous advertisement. Everybody will be eager to read my book so as to know what is in it!”

He had prophesied truly. The court assumed the airs of a critic and of a pedant, revised the book, cut out a few poems or verses which seemed to it to offend against prescribed canons, and the volume reprinted with these omissions had a sale such as its own merit should have secured it.

To postpone a work until it has obtained the sanction of a court of justice is to secure its success. Experience goes for nothing in such cases. A year later a similar blunder brought Flaubert's “*Madame Bovary*” wide and instantaneous celebrity. But “*Les Fleurs du Mal*,” his translation of the works of Edgar Poe, “*Les Paradis Artificiels*,” and “*Les Poemes en Prose*” had not enriched Baudelaire. It became almost impossible for him to stay longer in Paris. He took up his abode in Belgium, where a friend of his, a bankrupt publisher, was trying to repair his fortune by the production of immoral literature collected from various sources, and too often attributed to writers who had not perpetrated the volumes. There Baudelaire was struck down by a paralysis of his whole body. Unable to move, speechless, subject to fits of irritability which sometimes became outbursts of frenzy, he was brought back to Paris and placed in a private hospital.

What was left of the poet? Did his mind retain anything of its former power? Could he still produce the verses in his brain he found it impossible to write or to dictate? Was his mind still imbued with its old energy, and was it capable of understanding the horror of the calamity that had overtaken him? Or did he float among mists such as the breath of madness gathers together and then disperses? No man can answer these questions.

He passed away and was never able to describe his sensations. When he was brought back to Paris his mother wrote and begged me to go and see him. He was seated in a big arm-chair, his face and hands had that sodden, earthy pallor which is like the badge of insanity, his eyelids were swollen and his eyes had a fixed and questioning expression. There was not a trace of emotion upon his wasted features. Now and then, with an immense effort, he tried to raise himself and to answer what was said to him. He only managed to utter "Non, non, cré nom, non!" ("Non, non, *sacré nom*," etc.) and those were the only syllables, the only cries he ever produced. Death came to deliver him. The poetic litanies which clothed his dreams contained the following line:—

"O Satan! Prends pitié de ma longue misère!"

and the prayer was granted.

During the time I knew Baudelaire I also fell in with Philoxène Boyer, who was his exact opposite. If the one was a rebel the other was the most patient of human beings.

That small, nervous, weakly creature with his angular movements is a pathetic memory to me. His form was always buttoned into a spare looking black coat which accentuated his narrow shoulders; his pale face was almost that of a skeleton, and his head was too big for his body. His benevolent smile was perfectly genuine, he was grateful for the smallest service rendered him, ever ready to forgive

an injury, and most obliging. He was like an ill-fed cat which arches its back to be stroked.

He overflowed with admiration for the works of others. He would sob over Victor Hugo's verse and turn pale with emotion at some passage from Chateaubriand. He it was who said of the lines in which Ruy Blas apostrophises one of the courtiers : "C'est ruisselant d'inouïsme !" ("It is full of astonishing beauties, literally, streams with unheard-of or incomparable things !") An unedited poet, a Byron without his "Haydée," a Lamartine without his "Elvire," he, too, had dreamt of giving his name to the world, of writing poems and dramas. He had meant to be at one and the same time a Shakespeare and a de Musset, a Goethe and a Leopardi. But misfortune came upon him and he never made his mark. His was no ordinary talent, and although it lacked spontaneity its imaginative abundance often surprised one. Through the form in which he clothed his thought he often attained to originality rather than through the thought itself. He was gifted, and could dispose of all the conditions necessary for the development of his powers ; he spoilt his life, and fell so hopelessly that he could not rise again. The only son of a professor, his father\* had left him a small inheritance, about a hundred thousand francs, enough to live upon with economy while working and making a position for himself.

From his father he had learnt to talk Latin in his childhood. He carried off prizes at school and loved learning. No one ever had less knowledge of the world, and he could never acquire it. He was timid, naïf, confiding, and rather credulous. He had read Balzac, and to him he pinned his faith.

\* Philoxène Boyer's father was, I believe, professor of rhetoric (this expression, which occurs more than once in these "Recollections," does not mean that the master teaches rhetoric, but that he is over a certain class which bears the name of the rhetoric class.—TRANS.) at the Collège Stanislas, and proctor to the Collège Rollin.



His start in life was unfortunate. With the simple confidence of a novice he imagined he had found in the whole abject and starveling race who thought to enter literature through Bohemian methods a band of comrades and of friends. Philoxène Boyer was free with his money; they understood that he was a pigeon to be plucked, and gave him no quarter. They applauded him when he read his verses and were in raptures over his prose; they promised him fame, and declared that he had only to stretch out his hand to grasp the crown of immortality. But, they added, it is not enough in this idle, pleasure-loving city of Paris, contemptuous even of *chefs-d'œuvre*, it is not enough to have talent, one needs knowledge of the world as well.

"Talent," they said, "that is a good joke; why, we all have talent! The important thing is to become known. That is very easy. The way is to form a connection, to get acquainted with authors, journalists, artists, and actors, for they alone make a reputation and give it permanence. It is not difficult for a man with money to launch himself in this way. What course must he take? Why, give dinners, suppers, and other entertainments, not be too stiff about lending a little money, and surround himself with a number of allies who at the given moment will utter cries of admiration which will convince everybody. What matters the sacrifice of a few thousand-franc notes to gain fame and fortune when one may win the victory at a blow?"

Philoxène Boyer believed them, and became the liberal host of a hungry troop, who feasted on truffled partridge for the first time. He was their prey. By way of compensation they loaded him with hyperbole, dedicated their sonnets to him, and produced *rondeaux* in his honour. Henri Mürger, who knew how to sting, parodied some lines of the "Chanson des Pirates," and sang:—

"Dans la chambre de Philoxène  
Nous étions quatre-vingt rimeurs."

The poor fellow could not restrain his satisfaction, and ordered more dinners. Each guest brought a lady. Female supers and ladies past their youth, who had taken first parts at the small theatres, did not fail to put in an appearance where a meal was provided for nothing. Each of them found a bouquet beside her plate, and occasionally a couplet, which sent everybody into fits of admiration. Philoxène Boyer paid the piper, but he did not dance himself, for no man had fewer passions. Champagne made his head ache, truffles did not agree with him, and love was never more than a subject for his verse. He presided benevolent and smiling at the dinners he paid for. They were greedily devoured by others, but he did not take his share of the feast.

One day I heard Théophile Gautier say to him, "Ah! Philoxène, you are wasting your future as well as your money. When you have spent your last crown piece you will be face to face with want, a very unattractive companion. You will have to cringe and fawn, beg a corner of the newspaper, and compose learned articles for a living, while the dissipated fellows you have dined so often will be the first to turn their backs upon you." Philoxène Boyer quoted the famous aphorism, "*Pour être connu, il est indispensable de se faire connaître*" ("To be known it is necessary to make oneself known"), and added, "I am making friends who will open all paths to me." Then Gautier, who was not in the habit of singing, sang, "*Va t'en voir s'ils viennent, Jean!*" ("Go, see if they are coming, John!") That did not last long, a year or eighteen months at most. Boyer's hundred thousand francs were exchanged for venison, Johannisberger, moss roses, and Havana cigars, things which disappear and leave nothing behind them. He was ruined, but he had not made a name, and his former guests ridiculed him. Not content with laughing at him they insulted him, and there was a story of a duel, the details of which have escaped my memory, but which was scandalous. Then the unhappy man

began to lead a miserable existence. He was proud, and his principles were good. He would not borrow, because he knew that he should not be able to pay back. Therefore he set to work. Now and then he managed to get one of his articles accepted, but as he was known to be poor he was ill-paid by the papers he wrote for. His most reliable resource was for a long time the weekly article he wrote for a foreign journal, by which he gained twenty francs. Those eighty francs a month kept him from dying of starvation.

I often saw him at this time, for he had become attached to me, and still clung to the affection of friends in spite of painful experience. He liked to compare himself with Don César de Bazan,

“Tous les soirs danse et fête au vivier d’Apollo  
Et cent musiciens faisant rage sur l’eau !”

He would relate his deeds of valour, and recite for my benefit the verses which had been made in his honour. He blamed no one, and indulged in no recriminations. It occurred to him to start courses of lectures, literary lectures from which politics, political economy, and philosophy were excluded. They were admirable. I went several times to hear him in a room on the ground floor of one of the large houses of the Place Vendôme, and followed with interest a course he gave on the “Mémoires d’Outre-Tombe” of Chateaubriand. His gestures were violent and studied; his pretentious air disposed one to smile, but his eloquence, adorned with abundant imagery, was really powerful, and of the highest order; his style resembled a funeral oration rather than that of a lecture. Whether he improvised after having studied the subject, or recited what he had first written down, I am unable to say, and when I tried to question him on this subject he only gave me evasive replies. He was a natural orator, and would have made a first-rate lecturer. The taste for such lectures, as the English call them, had become general in Paris. Some of the fashionable

people had set the example, they had been imitated, this kind of intellectual distraction had taken hold on society, and the lecturers made a fair amount of money. Here would have been a source of income for Philoxène which would have enabled him to escape from his life of privation, but fate was against him. Cold and misery had weakened him. He was attacked by a form of consumption of the throat, and though he recovered from it he lost his voice, and could hardly speak above a whisper. His patience never failed him. With the sweetest resignation he used to say to me, "The gods have willed it otherwise. We must submit." One evening, however, I happened to be near him in a lecture-room. The lecturer struck the table with his fist, and threw himself about, but his matter was poor.

Philoxène Boyer got up and went out. I could see by the movement of his shoulders that he wept. I followed, took his arm, and walked along with him. He tried to smile, touched his voiceless throat with his hand, and said —

"Somewhere in Crete there was a stele on which these words were inscribed: 'Zeus will not thunder any more. He is dead long ago.'" Then, with a sob, he added, "It is in Athenæus."

He possessed true kindness, that quality which more than any other endears men to us. Marcus Aurelius had dedicated a temple to this great virtue.

The disappointments he had met with, the Sisypheus-stone his life became, the ingratitude of men had left no after-taste of bitterness. He was ever ready to oblige those who had shown themselves so unworthy of his kindness. When he had enough money in his pocket to supply the needs of a single day, he was always in good spirits, and would repeat the verses which were running through his head, in his cracked voice. Did he write no book? someone will ask. Certainly he produced several remarkable works, but they were not signed. One day he saw a book of his upon

my table, and with a smile he turned to me and quoted: "*Hos versiculos feci; tulit alter honores.*" I have no right to betray his confidence. I leave those who took advantage of his poverty, and appropriated the volumes into which he had put so much toil and knowledge, and so much talent, to enjoy the reputation they owe him. I refrain from naming them. Consistently with his hopeful character he had married, had thus given hostages to fortune, and sometimes he tottered under the burden.

Now and then the Minister of l'Instruction Publique remitted him some slight assistance; a subscription set on foot to bring out a volume of his poems was fairly successful, but could do but little to allay his sufferings, for these had passed the bounds of human endurance. God had pity on him and called him away. Among those who followed his poor funeral one would have looked in vain for those who struck their glasses together at the *Trois Frères Provençaux*, and shouted "*Vive Philoxène.*" In some of the miserable restaurants where *Philoxène Boyer* went to get a dinner at something less than a franc he would come across a strange young fellow who disguised himself in a blouse to sit and eat with cabmen and porters. This was *Charles Barbara*, notable for the imaginative gloom of his literary productions. He too was unfortunate, and yet he lacked neither courage nor ability.

*Edgar Quinet* says: "Talent, even genius, are only prophetic; a man must be born under a lucky star. When he has missed that he has missed everything."

I know not what had become of *Barbara's* star at the moment of his birth; probably it had been swept away, or possibly annihilated in some *Uranian cataclysm*, at any rate it never shone upon him, and in vain did he seek it. He was the son of an instrument maker in the provinces; he had learnt music, and could play well on the violin. I

believe that in his days of poverty he occasionally took his place among the orchestra of some small theatre.

He had come to Paris in search of employment, and had turned to literature, for which he felt a vocation. He could not have contributed much gaiety to the Bohemian society he frequented, for he was naturally melancholy, and the conditions of his life were not calculated to lessen his sadness. Diderot was an author he had studied carefully; his dry but vigorous style pleased him. Henri Mürger thought well of Barbara and used to say, "He was nourished upon the marrow of lions."

To have read Diderot meant in the eyes of Mürger, whose ignorance was positively encyclopædic, to have sounded the depths of human knowledge. Barbara was less easily satisfied; he studied much, and read diligently at the public libraries.

Was he perfectly sane? I think not. His brother, under the influence of cerebral excitement, had tried to blow out his brains, but had only succeeded in wounding himself in the forehead. As for him, it would seem as if the spirit of melancholy had spread her dark wing over his intellect. He was so sad at times, so gloomy and morose that it was hard to gain his confidence. Also his ideas were steeped in horror to such a degree that I always thought there was a want of mental balance. He was a water-drinker, and very temperate, yet in some respects he was like Edgar Poe. Like him he deals in horror, and his sole endeavour is to make his readers shudder. To him life presents itself as a perpetual and pitiless struggle with a relentless deity, who renews his strength after each defeat. His own existence was only a fight with misery and against an evil destiny which pursued him to the end. He fought with courage, but he was the weaker combatant, and at last he threw down his arms, he acknowledged himself beaten.

"L'Assassinat du Pont-Rouge" and the "Histoires

émouvantes " are books which should live after him. The first-named is a novel with certain defects of composition, but many powerful situations which illustrate the leading idea of an avenging moral force in a very noble manner. The second volume is a collection of stories, one of which, "Les Jumeaux," is strongly conceived. Two twin brothers are separated on the day of their birth, and each follows a different career. One of them becomes a soldier, the other a workman; the incidents of their life are really similar, but owing to the different environment in which each is placed produce varying results. On the same day the soldier fights a duel and the workman fights with knives.

The soldier having become an officer realizes his dream on the self-same day that his brother perishes upon the scaffold. The idea of the antithesis has been too much insisted upon, although the author is his own master in this matter, but the argument of society's "two weights and two measures" has never been better enforced.

In spite of his choice of painful and horrible subjects, it would be a mistake to imagine Charles Barbara's one of those jealous and bitter natures which rail at the rich and turn upon happier men.

His silence was a gentle silence; he was without gall, anger or vanity. He frequently wrote, "I believe that man is born to suffer." Certainly the poor fellow was no exception to the rule. He was a mixture of intelligence and of confusion of thought. His big head, covered with yellow hair, which already began to grow thin upon the temples, shaded a prominent forehead. The expression of his clean-shaven face was not unpleasant, in spite of the restless look which never left it. His reddish eyes had a self-absorbed and yet wandering glance.

It seemed as if Barbara were so accustomed to the disappointments of life that when people told him any good news he would hardly believe them, and thought they must be making game of

him. Everything, except adverse fortune, seemed so improbable in his own case. I have heard him say with a smile, "If literary men were to have titles conferred upon them I should ask for that of Marquis de Saint Guignon,\* out of compliment to the patron saint who has never denied me his protection."

He had a moment of hope when he believed that the wheel of fortune had turned, and that the fatal charm was broken which had paralyzed all his efforts. His novel, "*L'Assassinat du Pont-Rouge*," was dramatized and produced on the stage, where it met with some success.

I was present at the first representation, for I liked Barbara, and I rejoiced to see him lifted out of the thorny path he usually trod. The piece affected the audience, which trembled with emotion under the hand of a dramatist superior in power to the generality.

There was nothing commonplace in the play; it did not depend for its interest upon the vulgar situations, surprises, and mystifications in which such productions usually abound. The action was simple, and the events followed one another logically. Barbara reaped something besides plaudits. There was money in it—to make use of a technical expression—the author had his share, and for the first time in his life was able to face the future without anxiety.

The lull was not to last long. Charles Barbara married and had a few bright days. He lived with his wife, his mother-in-law, and a little girl who was born to him. He worked for them all, and lived a family life.

Paris was visited by typhoid fever in 1866. Death could not pass by Barbara; it entered his home, and with one sweep cut off his child, his wife, and his mother-in-law. Struck down by despair he fell a prey to the fever.

\* Marquis de Saint Guignon; this is a popular expression applied to anyone who is singularly unlucky.—TRANS.



On the 18th September he was taken to the hospital of the Maison Municipale and given a room on the third story. The next day at daybreak he opened the window and threw himself out. The rain was falling, and the ground was soft, his body sank into it, and he died at once.

I never was in his company without feeling convinced of the justice of a saying from La Bruyère, "When in the presence of certain forms of misery we cannot be happy without a kind of shame."

I do not know if it is by way of contrast that the thought of Barbara recalls that of Etienne Eggis, a Bohemian of a whimsical but amiable type of character. But for his moustache and his tall figure he might have been taken for a woman. With his pink and white complexion, his fine eyes and long chestnut hair, he would have been handsome but for the defective teeth which spoilt his smile.

He was not a Frenchman by origin, but Swiss, and born at Fribourg. Early in life he had led the wandering life of many a poor German student. He had travelled through the Duchy of Baden, Franconia, Saxony, Prussia, and Poland on foot, had slept wherever he could find chance shelter, sometimes under a tree and sometimes in a hay-loft.

Before Europe had been traversed by a network of railways it was not unusual to meet upon the highways of Germany and Switzerland small groups of young men on foot, each carrying a stick, and a travelling sack slung over their shoulder. They would pause where the hill began to ascend, hold out their caps and ask charity of the inmates of *diligences* and post-chaises in the name of theology, jurisprudence, medicine, or of the "doctorat utrinque juris." In return for the small silver pieces which were thrown to them these learned pilgrims would break out into song.

The poets have celebrated this existence. Eggis was happy in it and regretted it. He had come to Paris to seek his fortune with his head full of verses like a bird-catcher who has a cage full of birds. In

vain did the birds sing, fortune passed him by and would not pause to listen. Nevertheless the songs were good, and people of taste admired the "Voyage au Pays du Cœur." Now and then Eggis permitted himself some eccentric outbreak such as shocks our French severity, but is thought an exquisite joke in Germany. Below is an illustration :—

"Les Abeilles sentent pousser leur dard ;  
C'est le temps de chanter les baisers et les roses,  
Fleurs du jardin des cieux dans nos fanges écloses,  
Et de se restaurer de petits pois au lard."

It would not be fair to judge him by this couplet. His verses are those of a young man of twenty-one, carried away by poetic enthusiasm, but they are well constructed, and betray the hand of a poet. I had recommended Eggis to the editor of the *Moniteur Universel*. Louis de Cormenin had left it, but although the Minister Fould had announced that he only cared to attract writers "known to and appreciated by the public," I had imagined that a man who spoke several foreign languages, had a ready pen, and his living to gain, might be useful on an official journal. However, I was mistaken. Eggis was received by a mannerless clerk who very nearly turned him out by the shoulders, and who sent him roughly about his business. I was incensed, took the affair into my own hands and demanded excuses, of which Eggis received a full allowance. But apologies would not feed him any more than his poems, and he disappeared.

I took every opportunity of asking what had become of him, but no one could give me any news of him. At last I learnt that after many wanderings in Germany and Italy, after he had worked upon different newspapers, and edited *La Gazette des Etrangers* at Berlin, he had died of consumption on the 13th February, 1867.

Guillaume Lejean was a man of a different stamp. He belonged to the great race of those who discover new worlds and traverse unexpected continents with unshaken courage.

With his ill-washed face, his dreamy and serious air, and eyes fastened upon the earth, he seemed to be tracing out in thought routes known only to himself. He was in the habit of saying to me, "I am a rich man," because he had a fixed income of one thousand five hundred francs. His habits were those of an anchorite, satisfied with a crust of bread and a glass of water. He slept in a garret, and spent his time bending over maps.

Lejean was a Breton by birth, and possessed the powers of resistance of his native granite. Nothing daunted and nothing dismayed him. Once when travelling on foot through Greece, after having passed a night at Andritzena, he reached the river Alpheus, which had overflowed its banks. A boatman asked ten drachmæ to ferry him across the stream. Lejean shrugged his shoulders, undressed, made a bundle of his clothes, which he fastened above his head, and swam across the river. After the same economical method he traversed the whole of Epirus, Bulgaria, and Turkey, ascended the Nile as far as Gondokoro, tried to discover the pass of Bahr-el-Abiad, fought with hippopotamuses, and was very nearly snapped up by a crocodile when he had fallen asleep in the shade on the banks of the river.

Guillaume Lejean is dead. He had not the charm or the cleverness of Speke and Grant, nor the redoubtable energy of Stanley, yet it might have been his fate to discover Lake Nyanza and to descend the Congo.

Possibly he would have made the discovery more slowly and laboriously, but he would have achieved it nevertheless, because he was a born explorer. He was unfortunate in not being the subject of a Government capable of appreciating and helping him. The ministers who succeeded one another during the Second Empire cared nothing for Lejean. What was the use of going to Africa to determine the source of the rivers and the system of the mountain ranges of the Dark Continent? Poor Lejean

did not lose courage, although he was put off from day to day, and met with nothing but refusals.

When he had saved a little money he set off to visit a portion of Ethiopia. Madame Hortense Cornu made known this fact to Napoleon III., who spoke to Edouard Thouvenel, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, about Lejean.

Thouvenel imagined he was doing the right thing, and appointed Lejean Vice-Consul of France at Massaouah, with an official residence at Magdala, near the king Negus Theodoras. It was unwise to fix Lejean to one spot ; he should have been sent to investigate unknown lands. Lejean had to drink the kousso of the Negus long before the English Consul Cameron, and he was thrown into a dungeon like the Chevalier Joubert at Bayezid.

The women of Abyssinia have tender hearts, and in spite of his melancholy air, his long teeth, and his straight hair, Lejean awoke the youthful pity of his fair captors, and was thus enabled to bear the weight of his chains. He spoke of this circumstance with a degree of complacency, and even with a certain vanity.

In the *Revue des Deux Mondes* Lejean related his adventures when he acted as French representative in the land of the "King of Kings," who pretended that he was descended from the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. He also gave authoritative information concerning the Soudan, the Nubian Desert, the White Nile, and the existence of the Europeans in Khartoum. When at length he was able to escape from the clutches of the Negus and was back among us he did not think of rest. He longed to penetrate the impenetrable, and departed for Bokhara with the hope of reaching Samarkand. In the face of death and of slavery harder than death he would have carried out his plan.

Like the false Dervish Arminius Vambéry he would have traversed the Kara Koum and penetrated a region closed to Christian travellers, but

he was attacked on the way by the malady Rabelais calls "faulte d'argent" ("want of money").

Never have I perused accounts of discoveries made by Germans, Englishmen, and Americans without thinking of Guillaume Lejean, who was of a stature to follow in their steps, if not to precede them. But he had one failing, a rare one. He was so modest that he concealed his own high merit and was misunderstood by others. He it was who in the interval between two of his voyages introduced me to a young man of painfully pallid appearance called Emile Lamé, whose father, a celebrated mathematician, was a member of the Académie des Sciences. There was something naturally original and pleasing about him. To the *Revue des Deux Mondes* he had contributed several short stories, full of a happy combination of the realistic and the ideal, which seemed to indicate a well-balanced mind. He was tall, silent, and rather shy, and occasionally it seemed as though he were making an effort to come back from some dream if he were addressed. I observed that the pupils of his eyes dilated as if they had been painted with belladonna. Sometimes this symptom is observed in patients with a predisposition towards brain disease. Nothing, however, in his manner or conversation could then give me the impression that he was mentally afflicted. He spoke freely of his proposed labours. The stories he only regarded as a sort of exercise to improve his style. He was very courteous, and listened to the technical advice given him with a degree of deference which is rare in young authors. One evening he heard voices calling to him from the skies; he climbed out upon the window-ledge and wanted to walk into space. He was picked up in the street below, and did not survive the fall.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SAINT SIMONIANS.

CHARLES LAMBERT BEY, whom I had known in Cairo, and with whom I had discussed metaphysics, philosophy, and religion under the trees of the Ezbekiyeh, had returned to Paris after having obtained his pension and bid farewell to the Viceroy of Egypt. A more ardent Saint Simonian than ever, and convinced that he was one of the Apostles of the faith preached between the years 1828 and 1832, he had embraced the work of the propaganda with enthusiasm, and had devoted his life to it.

Immediately upon my return he had hastened to call upon me, and we again enjoyed those long conversations together which had given me so much pleasure in the past. Either at his house or at mine we met and had interminable discussions. Without accepting all his interesting but somewhat vague theories, it was to me a keen intellectual pleasure when I could listen to Lambert's incisive, well-chosen exposition, enhanced by a great charm of manner.

At that period I delighted in discussion based on hypothesis only, in the courteous polemics which recalled the science of the scholastics, and in the syllogistic duel which is fought with foiled weapons.

I was ready to spend the whole night in such conversations, and more than once Lambert and I saw the day break to our no small surprise, for we had fancied it was but eleven in the evening. Lambert felt the need of speech, and it was a

delight to me to listen. There was an affinity between us, and we understood one another perfectly.

He revered Enfantin the "Père" to a degree which approached veneration, and spoke of him as a devotee speaks of his God. From his lips I heard the story of their joint lives. He told me about the course of instruction received in the Rue de Monsigny, and about the sermons preached in the Taitbout lecture-room; then he spoke of the schism which had divided the disciples, of the retreat at Ménilmontant, of the lawsuit in which he had himself addressed the Court, together with Charles Duveyrier and Michel Chevalier, of the imprisonment of the "Père," of the departure for Egypt, and of that which he himself called the dispersion of the Apostles.

As he sat talking with a turban upon his head, his fine eyes fixed upon the listener, a smile on his lips, and turning a rosary in his fingers, he was like some Indian mystic relating the avatars of Vishnu.

Prosper Enfantin was then residing at Lyons, and engaged in the management of the railway line between Paris and the Mediterranean. He often visited Paris, however, and spent a few days in his little apartment of the Boulevard Poissonniere. These visits were a *fête* for his disciples, who gathered round him as soon as he arrived. I had informed Lambert of my desire to make Enfantin's acquaintance during one of his brief visits. He replied —

"The 'Père' knows you, for he has often heard of you. When he sees fit, when the hour shall have come, you will have speech of him and he will send for you."

On the 24th February, 1853, the hour came. Enfantin did not say, "Leave your nets and follow me." He wrote to me —

"Give me the pleasure of hearing from yourself why I do not know you. We breakfast every

morning in the inn at 10.30. Come and call for me. At least I shall be able to shake hands with you.

“Yours,

“P. ENFANTIN.”

My curiosity was excited, and I was punctual. The judgments I have heard expressed whenever Père Enfantin has been spoken of have erred by being in one extreme or in the other; they were always wanting in moderation. In the eyes of some he was an apostle, others denounced him as a charlatan; on the one hand the most boundless admiration and even adoration, on the other unrestrained abuse and detraction! To me he seemed an enigma it would be interesting to study.

He received me cordially, as if we were friends who had met after a long separation, and made use of the greeting he generally reserved for his disciples, “*Les enfants de mes enfants sont mes enfants*” (“My children’s children are my children”). I had expected to see a kind of modern Apollonius of Tyanus, a wonder-worker, dressed in a frock-coat, talking oracularly and posing. He was free from everything of the kind. His simplicity and kindness were most attractive, and in his youth he must have been as handsome as an Olympian god. He had just passed his fifty-seventh year, and he appeared older. His broad forehead was deeply furrowed, his cheeks were hollow, his hands trembled, and he moved slowly, like a man wearied with having traversed the greater part of life’s journey. Notwithstanding his affable manners and pleasant way of talking it was easy to guess what he concealed to a certain extent—namely, that he aimed at universality.

On all subjects he held fixed opinions, deduced from axiomatic principles, from which the conclusion was logically evolved. It was the same whether he spoke of philosophy or commerce, of painting or music. He had what he called “circumferential” ideas, and each new fact found its



own place in one of these categories as well as its explanation.

Those who were accustomed to the working of his mind and had studied his mode of reasoning could perceive when once they held the thread of the argument whither it would inevitably lead him. Whether true or false, there was nothing haphazard about his doctrine, as those who understood it admitted, not one weak ring in the solid chain of reasoning. But as with every other philosophical system, the premises must first be accepted, otherwise everything disappears in smoke.

Enfantin's disciples treated him with more than filial respect. He *thou'd* each one of them, but perhaps Louis Jourdan, who had been his companion in dark days, was the only member of the society who used the second person singular in addressing him. He was really their father, and, without entering into useless details here, I may say of him that in their service he never spared his purse, his time, or his energies. I was deeply attached to him, and my reverence for his memory has remained unshaken.

He thoroughly understood character, and without any elaborate study of mine he perceived in me a rebellious spirit which did not make me a fit subject to join a community. Had it been necessary to choose the life of a phalanstery or that of Saint Simon Stylites, I should have preferred to ascend the column of the anchorite. Enfantin would smile and say —

"You will always be my child, but never my disciple."

In this relationship his affection was precious to me, and I delighted in his conversation. When he entered upon metaphysical and philosophical subjects and developed them in their application to the Saint Simonian dogma, his language would at first seem difficult and obscure. Certain expressions he was in the habit of using, and which he had diverted from their usual meaning, gave a misty, intangible

character to his discourse. He was himself aware of this, and used to say to Lambert —

“You must remove the sediment and clear the troubled water.”

But when one had grown accustomed to his manner of speech one could listen to him for hours without being weary. No one ever knew better how to adapt himself to his hearer. There were certain questions he considered of paramount importance, and which belonged to the first plane of ideas, according to him, when social problems had to be solved, he never even touched upon in my presence.

At the beginning of our acquaintance I had told him that I understood nothing of industrial or economic questions, nor of finance, that I was willing, if it suited him, to admit the equality of women, but that I could never consider commerce or money affairs as equal in importance to the arts and sciences.

Enfantin answered —

“You despise manufacturers and men of business. It is usual for authors and artists to do so. Doubtless you think that they live on a dung-heap, and are busied with vulgar matters. Perhaps you are right, but when their work is done, and the dung-heap swept away, what do you see on the scene of their activity? Canals and ports have been dug, towns have been rendered habitable, new and hygienic sites built over, forests cleared, railways have been opened, friendly relations established between different nations, and such mutual interests as make war distasteful. That is the work you regard from a superficial point of view, and judge arbitrarily, as if you were to judge a statue by the scaffolding which hides it from view, but helps in its construction. Civilization’s greatest triumphs are achieved by the help of financial and commercial undertakings.”

To which I replied, “You are perfectly right, I do not deny it; but you will never teach me to prefer a line of railway or a joint-stock company to a poem.”

He laughed and said, "That proves to me you have not yet put off the old man. You may write a splendid poem upon the desert, but were it a *chef-d'œuvre* it could never be as valuable as the canal the engineer cuts through the sand, and which brings water, verdure, and life in the place of barrenness."

Each of us remained unconvinced, and, as he was not the type of man to cast his grain upon unthankful soil, we banished this subject of conversation by common consent.

On the other hand, what long talks we had about eternal life, about the soul, which was and is, and will ever be!

My pantheistic tendencies and the spiritualistic beliefs I had formed disposed me to seek for arguments in support of such views. I said to the Père —

"I do not care to know anything about your social and economic system, but I belong to you because of your letter to Charles Duveyrier: 'Thou didst exist before thou wast born, and after thy death also thou shalt continue to exist.'"

Death is only one of life's stages. He believed that the soul could project itself throughout humanity, that Demosthenes, for instance, is in every great orator. I have heard him say, "I feel the spirit of Saint Paul within me." Probably he would not have rejected the idea expressed by the Princess Palatine on the 2nd August, 1696, "According to my simple judgment I believe that when we die each element of our being returns to its primitive condition to produce something else." Enfantin had evolved the God Père et Mère, and was not pleased when I told him that his idea was as old as the world.

The Zeus of Dodona was male and female, like so many other deities of the Pagan world. To symbolize the transmigration of souls among the planets brass tripods were arranged in a circle, and when one was struck all the others resounded.

Enfantin asked me to write down some account of this fact. I did so with considerable detail, for the studies I had made previous to my travels had familiarized me with the subject.

When he had read what I had written he exclaimed, "Those wretched ancients. They had guessed everything." When Pius IX. promulgated the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception he was enchanted. "At last the male paradise is worked out, and woman is introduced. Beside God Himself on His very throne they have placed the Goddess. It is a pledge for the future. This idea will pass out of religious law into social law, and woman will be man's equal. The Catholic Church has been allowed to take the initiative in a matter which ought to have been settled long ago." Several times he endeavoured to bring over priests whom he suspected of heterodox opinions to his religion, and he corresponded either directly or through one of his disciples with the Abbé Gratry. The "Père" had attempted what must have been a hopeless task from the beginning, in consequence of the fact that Gratry loved to found his argument upon mathematical formulæ, and he himself was a gifted mathematician.

Like the patriarchs of old the Saint Simonians were proud of their pedigree. Men whose names they pronounced in reverential tones had "begotten them into a new life."

Once at a dinner at the Tuileries the conversation turned upon Saint Simonism, and the old calumny which assails every young sect was revived. They were accused of allowing polygamy.

"Take care," said the Emperor, with a smile, "perhaps there are some Saint Simonians among us."

The guests looked startled, and were still further impressed when the Prince de . . . rose up and said, "I am the son of Talabot, who was the son of Lambert, who was the son of Enfantin, who was the son of Olinde Rodrigues, who was the son of Saint Simon."

Napoleon III. glanced across the table at three of his Ministers and a Senator. As they did not see fit to make their confession of faith he changed the subject. This school of thought certainly produced many remarkable men.

Some of them were proud of their origin, but others concealed it carefully.

One day I felt it my duty to remind Husson, who was at the head of Municipal affairs in Paris, director of the Assistance Publique, and Chief Secretary to the Prefecture of the Seine, that he was once "a member of the Collège and of the Second Order."

Several individuals who have thought fit to deny it once wore the dress of the Society. I will be discreet and not tell which it was of writers still living among us who formerly attired themselves in the waistcoat, the renowned waistcoat the brethren were laced into, and which no one could put on without help. That was symbolic, and was meant to teach the following lesson: "Thou needest thy brother, remember that he also stands in need of thee." The costume of the Society set the whole of Paris laughing in 1832. It was emblematic, but very ugly. It was first worn on a day of insurrection. The "Père" came down from the heights of Ménilmontant at the head of his disciples to interpose himself between the armed and contending parties, and to preach peace. The soldiers mistook the Saint Simonians for rebels, and fired upon them. The insurgents on their side thought they were soldiers, and did not spare their shot either. In the confusion a few of the brethren's tunics were pierced by bullets, but that was the worst of the damage.

On the day of the trial, as the members of the Society were crossing the Rue de la Barrillerie, on their way to the Cour d'Assises, the mutinous crowd hooted them and shouted, "A la chienlit!" (Merry-andrews or buffoons). Their demeanour was so calm that one of the scoffers, Pierre Vinçard, the song-writer, was converted on the spot. It must be

admitted that it was a strange dress; it was not very easy to face a mocking city like Paris so attired. It consisted of white trousers, a red waistcoat, and a purple tunic. White is the colour of love, red signifies work, and purple faith. The complete costume, therefore, meant that Saint Simonism was founded upon love, was fortified by toil, and that it was permeated by faith. The head-gear and the scarf were left to individual taste, but as every man is responsible for himself both in this life and in the life to come, each Saint Simonian must bear his name inscribed in large letters upon his breast.

People laughed a great deal, and nobody remembered that in the Tyrol the inhabitants have their name embroidered on a leathern belt. On the front of *Enfantin's* tunic "*Le Père*" was written, and on *Duveyrier's* "*Charles, Poète de Dieu.*"

By way of completing this unsightly costume they wore a collar covered with metal lozenges, spheres, and triangles, which symbolized certain truths connected with the new religion. It was more like the realization of the dream of some delirious tinker.

I often remarked that, although they made constant efforts to understand it, art was a subject they never grasped. Almost the only artist who joined the body was *Félicien David*, for *Gleyre* was attracted by them, but never joined the Society. *Enfantin's* collar, which is in my possession, has a half sphere at one end of it with the words "*Le Père*" inscribed in relief. The sphere would be completed only on the day when "*La Mère*" should have been found.

In the famous portrait *Léon Cogniet* painted of *Enfantin* in the dress of the brotherhood he is represented standing in front of a seat which has room for two persons. He points to the vacant place to show that he is waiting for "*La Mère.*"

What kind of being was this longed-for mother, this feminine Messiah, the brethren invoked with such fervour? Doubtless she represented emanci-

pated womanhood. The word "emancipated" should not be taken in its bad sense; that was the misconception the scoffers and wags gladly embraced. The idea was sufficiently original without crediting it with an interpretation nothing in the doctrine of Saint Simonianism ever justified.

The emancipated woman, according to its teaching, ought to be a woman of ripe reason, who should have reflected on the condition of her "Sisters" and studied their needs. Having a knowledge of women's special aptitudes derived from the careful observation and thought man has not devoted to the subject, she would without reserve make full confession on behalf of her sex, so as to furnish the data necessary before setting forth a complete statement of woman's rights and of woman's duties. This hope was a dream; woman will never reveal herself wholly to man. They are two beings not merely different, but diverse. Their mode of thought is entirely dissimilar, and as long as the world lasts the one will never completely understand the other. According to Hallé, "Woman is the nervous element in human nature, man the muscular element," mere words which explain nothing! Man tries to hide himself from woman, woman hides herself from man, and thus they go through life thinking they understand one another, because each possesses the gift of speech. Whether or no either is superior to the other I cannot judge. It may be that they are equal, but they are certainly divergent by nature. Absolute equality between the sexes would result, say the Saint Simonians, in perfect happiness for the human race; on the other hand the physiologists affirm that it would be an anomaly. Among the highest peaks of the Himalaya Mountains, between Thibet, Bengal, and the Kirat country, is a region of Boutan, which has for its capital a fortified castle seven stories high, called Tassidudon.

The only religion known to the inhabitants is Buddhism, and they adore its prophet, Gaütama,

who was the Sakya-Mouni. Women are the equals, and, therefore, the rulers of men. Gentle reader, avert your eyes; the conjugal system they have established is polyandria. It was nothing new invented by Enfantin this search for the equal and emancipated woman. Long before Saint Simon, when Augustin Thierry was his secretary, he thought that he had discovered her in Madame de Staël. He thereupon wrote and asked her to come to his assistance, and to try to find a new Messiah who should proclaim that law of life which would bring about universal happiness. Madame de Staël smiled, and left the invitation unanswered.

When George Sand published her early novels, which seemed like a cry of revolt, a thrill passed through Saint Simonian society, which imagined that the expected Deborah had appeared. To Adolphe Gérault, since French Consul at Mazatlan, editor of *l'Opinion Nationale*, and a deputy for Paris, was confided the mission of bringing over to the "doctrine" this *Lélia*, who seemed prepared to recite the "Confiteo" and the "Credo" of her sex. Gérault found an ill-dressed woman anxious to earn a livelihood by the exercise of her talent, but unwilling to become the High Priestess of a new religion. It was a disillusion which was painfully accentuated when George Sand published her *Mémoires*.

Enfantin had been expecting them with the anxiety of a navigator in search of an undiscovered country. He had imagined that they would contain an exhaustive confession which would throw light upon the hidden depths of woman's nature, but in this he was disappointed. The Saint Simonian formula, which sums up the view taken of this subject, and which was published in *l'Organisateur* in two different types of printed characters, to indicate the distinction between the premises and the conclusion of the proposition, was stated thus:—

PREMISES : *Man* contemplates the Past.

*Woman* foresees the Future.

CONCLUSION : Together, the *Couple* behold the Present.



That is to say, the complete being consists of male and female united in a certain sense, and the doctrine is only a return to the tradition of the Book of Genesis. God created man, male and female. From another point of view the idea here formulated is that as man turns back to the past and woman is occupied with the future, so long as they continue unequal a hiatus exists between them in time, which causes the present to slip through their hands. It is the disagreements and misunderstandings consequent upon this inequality which produce many of the miseries of life. In order that humanity may be really happy man and woman must help one another, have equal rights, and walk in step together towards the same ends.

To compass this perfect union produced by the fusion of two different forces, woman must yield up the secret of her physical, intellectual, and moral nature. Only a woman who is free can make such a revelation, therefore the "Mère" must be found.

But the search was in vain. Had she existed in Europe she must have appeared, with such force and conviction was she summoned. Among which race and in what quarter of the world would she arise? At this stage a strange idea was conceived in the brain of one of the "Pères," an eminent engineer, and a "member of the College of the first order."

It occurred to Emile Barrault that in the East, doubtless in the solitude of a harem, some Muslim beauty might have reflected on the condition of woman, have embodied her thought, and be eager to give the world the result of her meditations. Such an absurd notion argued utter ignorance of the childish frivolity and inanity of the oriental woman, whether she be Muslim, Jew, Buddhist, or Christian. "Our ancestors," said the brethren, "fought in the Crusades to deliver the tomb of Christ; let us undertake a crusade to deliver woman from the sepulchre which closes her in."

The mission to search for the "Mother" was organized, and it set forth. The pilgrims were

twelve in number, and included Barrault, who led the expedition. It was bound for Constantinople, but as the party was short of money it was not easy to reach that city. Clothed in white to symbolize the vow of chastity they had taken before quitting Paris, and with their staff in their hand, the brethren asked alms along their route in the name of the "Mother." In Burgundy they took hire to help gather in the harvest. At Lyons they arrived on the eve of a public execution, and uttered their protest against capital punishment. At Marseilles they embarked, and worked their passage out on board a merchant vessel, of which it happened that Garibaldi was the mate. They were landed at Smyrna, and slept in a garden under the fig trees, which gave them sustenance.

At last they arrived at Constantinople. Surely there behind the latticed windows of some harem, in the recesses of a palace, its base perchance bathed by the waters of the Bosphorus, the "Mother" must be hidden; possibly she might be awaiting the searchers.

They slept to escape from the morning dew under the cypresses of the great Turkish cemetery, wandered through the bazaars, stopped occasionally to preach the faith of Saint Simon, and spoke French to the Turks, who could not understand them, but touched their forehead with their finger and passed by respectfully, because in the East insanity is sacred. They said of them, "Some dervishes from the land of the Franks."

Sultan Mahmoud heard that some men were wandering through the streets and pronouncing unintelligible discourses. He had them arrested and thrown into prison. Then he sent a police officer to ask them what their business was in Stamboul. Barrault made out a declaration, which was translated into Turkish, and laid before the Sultan. It contained the following phrases: "Saint Simon, *Enfantin*, the supreme Father; the God *Père et Mère*; woman the equal of man; art the equal of

commerce; the future life, the transmigration of souls; no one of us is God, but God is in each one; the golden age is not behind us as the poets sang, but before us; the heavens will be rent asunder, and we shall see God in His glory."

Sultan Mahmoud read this statement of the principles of the sect, could not understand its meaning, but said, "They are not dangerous, release them," and they were set free.

One of their number, a doctor, called Charpin, was sent for by an Armenian, whose son had broken his leg. He attended the patient, cured him, and was paid 300 francs, which he passed on to Barrault. Barrault called a meeting of his fellow believers. They met round the tomb which, with its half fallen *stele*, served him for a sleeping chamber and a study. He addressed them thus —

"My children, I fear that the 'Mother' is not here. We are losing precious time, which ought to be devoted to apostolic work. Thanks to Charpin we are rich, and 300 francs should enable us to begin some great work. We must work by example, and show that in us is the living law. We are, therefore, about to start for Oceania, and shall stop at the Island of Rotouma, which possesses a mild climate and a fertile soil. There we will found the religion of Saint Simon and set up the model Government. The fame of our happy state will reach Europe, and the Powers will endeavour to imitate us. But first of all we must accomplish our task, and assure ourselves that the 'Mother' is not in Russia. We are going to cross the Euxine."

As soon as they set foot on the quay at Odessa they were conducted to a police station, questioned, and put in prison.

The Emperor Nicholas's passion for innovators was easy to appease, and the Governor of Odessa was aware that such was the case. The next morning Barrault and his companions were brought before him. He gave them their choice. They would either be conducted stage by stage to St.

Petersburg, or they would have to return to Constantinople. Their choice was quickly made, and they went back to Turkey. The island of Rotouma was too distant, their purse was too light. The "Mission de la Mère" was at an end. They separated, and each went his own way. The greater number rejoined Enfantin, who was in Egypt, where the Arabs had named him "Abou-l-Dhounieh." I have known several Saint Simonians who went in search of the "Mother." They did not speak without emotion of this passage in their life. They looked back to it with regret, told of their youth, and of the enthusiasm of their faith. But Enfantin, after having lived in the East and studied its customs, did not care to recall these memories.

He admitted that this youthful expedition had been inspired by inexperience, and the thirst for the unknown which excites men whose brains are in a ferment of ideas.

I am disposed to think, however, that when the mission started full of hope and enthusiasm he had shared his disciples' illusion. The authority he retained over them might fitly be called absolute. Even the dissenters, several of whom were famous, approached him with a respect which was quite spontaneous. The dissenters were those Saint Simonians who had joined the schism of Bazard. Bazard was a politician before all things, and of a combative disposition. He had been one of the disseminators in France of Carbonarist opinions, and one of the instigators of the Belfort plot. The Saint Simonian family was in his eyes merely an organization it would be possible to utilize to gain a seat in the Chamber of Deputies or to help to pass certain Liberal measures he thought desirable. When the question of the equality of the sexes was brought forward the struggle began, differences arose, and the rupture became definite, but not before it had been marked by incidents of an excessively violent character.

Enfantin and Bazard entered the lists and con-

tended in the presence of their disciples. Each made his appearance during these animated discussions, followed by his faithful adherents.

Jean Reynaud, Pierre Leroux, and Carnot were for Bazard; Lambert, Laurent (of the Ardèche), Michel Chevalier, and Henri Fournel for *Enfantin*. Between the two hostile groups were to be seen Auguste Comte in an absorbed mood, Le Play listening attentively, Sainte-Beuve with a sarcastic air, Gile de Beaumont wrapped in his own thoughts, and Béranger meditating his poem, "*Des Fous*." One evening the contest grew hotter than usual, and after a retort from *Enfantin* Bazard was struck by a fit of apoplexy.\*

The Père said, "My children, Bazard has just been struck by a thunderbolt."

A man must indeed be convinced who is ready to argue the point to the death.

*Enfantin* was the opposite of Bazard in this respect, that he was ready to accept any form of government, and was interested only in the social question.

He tried to maintain friendly relations with the various Governments established under the Restoration, the Monarchy of July, the Second Republic, and the Second Empire. The form of government mattered but little to him, and he would willingly have adapted himself to any constituted authority. The fact was he was a priest, and would not have scrupled to use the secular arm on behalf of his faith. I have observed the same tendency in all Socialists, and I have known a great many of various sects.

Their faith in their theories was so strong that they would not have hesitated to drive them into the heads of the people like Mohammed at the point of the sword. Poor Mapah, who had himself for his one and only disciple, † dreamt of converting the whole

\* Bazard did not die at once, but he never revived, and passed away at Courtry on the 29th July, 1832.

† (Note 2 to p. 98 of the "*Recollections*"). This is not quite accurate. "*L'Arche de la Nouvelle Alliance*" was published in 1840 by the individual who was once called Caillaux.

world by force of arms to what he called the "culte évadien" (the religion of evasion). His name was Ganneau, and when anyone inquired his name he would reply, "I am he who was Ganneau."\*

According to the religion he had invented a man must escape from his own personality and become another man. I once met him in Gleyre's studio. We engaged in argument, and as I was *naïf* enough to quote a saying from the Sermon upon the Mount, he folded his arms and cried out, "Learn that I care no more for Jesus Christ than for the excrement a bird drops upon the horn of a bullock." After that I did not care to press the matter.

The edifice *Enfantin* dreamt of constructing exists already, and has long been in existence. Although continually threatened, it is still standing. That edifice is Catholicism. The Saint Simonians proposed to substitute the "Père" for the Pope, and they then believed that the metaphysico-socialistic revolution would be accomplished. The fundamental axiom of the creed does not disprove what I say, "to each according to his capacity, to each capacity according to the work done." The formula has an attractive sound, but how much disillusion would it not involve were it put in practice? Who was to be the judge of a man's capacity for work and of his work? The reply was the "Père" and some of his delegates. The result would mean the establishment of the narrowest form of theocratic despotism. Outside the faith there could be no salvation. With such a creed freedom disappears, and human nature is not permitted to turn either to the right or to the left.

One day I made this observation to Lambert. He replied, "I like to live under a hierarchy," and

\* "He who was Ganneau" proclaimed the superiority of woman over man. One reason for calling his religion "Évadienne" was that Eve was set first in his creed, and after her Adam. He himself was called *Mapah*, a name composed of the two first syllables of the words *mamma* and *papa*. I am not aware that the final "h" had a symbolic meaning; I imagine it was only added by way of ornament.

added, "The spirit of protest is eternal, and you will be the Protestant to all eternity."

Nothing, neither failure nor the unconquerable love of freedom which exists in man, could ever modify *Enfantin's* opinions. He remained to the end what his disciples had thought him when he seemed to them in the lecture hall of *Taitbout* or the garden of *Ménilmontant*, the *Zeus* of the modern world.

In spite of his gracious kindness and benevolence towards all who approached him, in spite of his high intelligence which led him to seek for extenuating causes to account for the worst actions, he was full of unconquerable pride.

One evening the conversation turned, among others, upon the two great French Ministers, famous especially in finance—*Sully* and *Turgot*.

"There are no great men," said he, "except those who have founded religions—*Zoroaster*, *Moses*, *Jesus*, *Mohammed*, *Luther*." He paused, as if another name he did not venture to utter hung upon his lips. We were all silent, but each one had understood and completed the sentence for himself.

Among the many letters I possess which he wrote me, I find one which should be quoted here, for in it he speaks of himself. Doubtless I had written to him in one of those moods of nervous malaria to which I was subject in my youth. In his reply he gives me some excellent counsel as to the management of my health, and adds at the close of his letter:—

"What is the use of living? you say to me. What has come to you, my poor young friend? Did you once dream that you would ever be the friend of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John* of the four evangelists? No, indeed! You thought you might one day be a member of the *Academy*, or, perhaps, carry off one of the *Sultan's* favourite wives.

"Did you ever imagine that across eighteen

centuries and a half Christ, by my mouth, would say to you in your day of suffering and of tears, 'I love thee?' I fancy that Mark, Luke, Matthew, and John were Lambert, Fournel, Jourdan, and Duveyrier, but as I never inquired I cannot be certain."

Was *Enfantin* conscious of a vanity which made him the equal of the gods? I think so. On one occasion when I was out walking with him, I questioned him about the period of the retreat to *Ménilmontant*, about the dress of the society and the sittings of the Court of Assizes, during which he tried the power of his glance upon the judges seated on the tribunal. He was beginning to answer me quite affably, when he suddenly broke off and said, "Be silent, I feel my madness comes back upon me."

However, let no one pronounce an unfavourable judgment upon him because of this saying. That would be a mistake, for he had a great soul.

No man ever endeavoured more ardently to attain perfection. Certainly he had a fixed idea, believed in his mission, and thought himself one of those founders of religions he loved to speak of. But he was sincere, incapable of conscious deception. He may have believed himself to have been Mohammed or Moses, but never did he place a grain of wheat in his ear to make his hearers think he was listening to the pigeon (!), nor did he ever wave his rod before his followers to indicate the position of a spring of water which others had long since discovered. Neither was he an unpractical dreamer. He knew that man is not to be made happy by words, however beautiful, and he tried to add to man's happiness by increasing the number and amount of those good gifts which he holds dear.

Before himself, his own interest or his own success, before all things, he loved humanity. I will give a convincing proof of what I have just stated, which, I think, reveals his whole character.

In 1832 he was sentenced to a year's imprison-



ment and confined at Sainte Pélagie, where he spent his leisure time in teaching the prisoners to read. At the end of six months he was released, and his disciples gathered round him anxious to know what he would decide to do. Pacuvius wrote, "*Patria est ubicumque bene*" ("Here is the Fatherland, it is well to dwell in it"). The "Père" judged otherwise; he said, "Our Fatherland is here and needs our services." He placed himself at the head of the "Family" and went to Egypt in order that he might gain Mohammed 'Ali's authorization and connect the Mediterranean with the Red Sea.

It had long been one of the Saint Simonian projects, this idea of opening direct communication with India by means of ports, a canal through the Isthmus of Suez, railways and steamships, and it had often been proposed and explained in detail in the *Producteur* of 1825 and in the *Organisateur* of 1828.\*

The work of levelling was begun, the "barrage" of the Nile and prepared, the Saint Simonians' hopes were raised when Mohammed 'Ali, inspired by the English Consul-General, declared that it would be sacrilege to let the sea in upon the desert Nabi Mouça (the Prophet Moses) had traversed. Such reasoning was unanswerable, and there was nothing to do but to submit.

Enfantin returned to France, where he had to provide himself with the necessaries of life, but he never entirely abandoned the project he had hoped to execute with the help of his disciples, most of whom were former pupils of the Polytechnic School, mining engineers, makers of bridges and highways; in fact, men technically trained in it, and whose science and devotion to their profession had been

\* In a conversation with Eckermann, which took place on the 21st February, 1827, Goethe expresses a desire to see the Isthmus of Suez pierced by a canal, to see another at Panama, and to see communication opened between the Rhine and the Danube. Thanks to French initiative only the last remains to be accomplished still.

proved. He founded his "Society for the study of matters connected with the Suez Canal."

He selected from each European country which had a practical interest in the Suez Canal at least one engineer for membership and to assist in the deliberations of the Society. During the reign of Louis Philippe and under the Second Republic every effort was merely tentative. But after the Crimean War, which allied England and France, Turkey owed those powers a debt of gratitude, and the hour seemed propitious to secure a firman from the Sultan and the Viceroy of Egypt which should sanction the undertaking.

Enfantin had then left Lyons, was living in Paris at the Rue Chaptal, and devoting all his time to the realization of this scheme. He had several interviews with Napoleon III., who promised that he would enforce the project by diplomatic intervention. This time Enfantin was confident of success. Abbas Pasha was strangled on the 14th July, 1854, and Said Pasha succeeded him.

The new Viceroy was acquainted with M. Ferdinand de Lesseps, who had held the post of French Consul at Cairo, and to him he granted the firman. To Enfantin the blow was a severe one, and for a moment he seemed crushed by the shattering of hopes he had nourished for thirty years. "In 1833," he said to me "twelve of my 'children' died of cholera at Batu-el-Hagar; their bodies were buried near that barrage they were engaged upon, and swept away by the Nile towards the sea we wished to lead, like the great human stream, across the continents. I had hoped that the Suez Canal would be a Saint Simonian work and would bear our name, and that those of my followers who are still living would see in it the reward of the sacrifices they have made for their new faith. It pains me to fall back into the ranks of the spectators."

Without previous agreement among ourselves, from that time forth we never spoke before Enfantin of the Suez Canal. We did not care to give him

pain. Meantime, in spite of innumerable difficulties, M. de Lesseps was carrying out with admirable energy the work which had been given him to do.

One day, two years later, when I saw that Enfantin was in good spirits, and knew that he had given up all hope, I smilingly laid a finger upon his heart and said —

“Well, and how is the Isthmus of Suez?”

He replied, “That is all right. I was an old fool to grieve over it, for everything has turned out for the best, most providentially. In my hands the undertaking could only have failed. I have no longer the energy or the initiative to combat the opposition I must have met with, to withstand London, Constantinople, and Cairo. The sand would have proved a sufficient obstacle for me. I should have been vanquished by the obstruction I must have met with from other men. To succeed, and this work is going to succeed, a man must be the very devil, like De Lesseps, for persistence, and have that sort of energy which counts neither pains nor obstacles. Thanks be to God, De Lesseps will now unite the two seas. I believe of a certainty that I should have been arrested by Lake Timsah, and that there I should probably have drowned both myself and my enterprise. What does it matter if old Prosper Enfantin did meet with a disappointment, or if his children’s hopes were blighted? What does matter is that a canal should be made through the Isthmus, and that will be accomplished. Therefore, I am grateful to De Lesseps, and bless him.”

We were quite alone, no one could hear us. He was speaking from his heart, and a saying of his recurred to me —

“There can be no true greatness without self-sacrifice.” \*

Enfantin rests at Père-Lachaise, under the shadow of some great trees, in the spot to which his own

\* All the papers which constitute what were called the “Saint Simonian Archives” are deposited in the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, and cannot be made public until the year 1894.

disciples bore him. His bust has been placed over his tomb, and represents him as he was in life, with his floating locks and his long beard. He wears the emblematic collar. He had been struck down by an attack of apoplexy on the 21st of August, 1864,\* and previously, on the 13th of February, 1864, Lambert, who was called the mirror of the Père, had succumbed to a sudden inflammation.

"My thought grows clear," Enfantin used to say, "when it is filtered through his mind."

The best loved of his disciples, the one whose affection seemed to be absolutely necessary to him, was Louis Jourdan, who died at Algiers (2nd June, 1881), where he had spent the years of his careless youth, and where he had gone to end his days in the light and sunshine.

We called him the white-headed one, for from the age of thirty his thick hair was as white as snow. It may be that there have been other men as good, but I am sure there never lived a better. He seemed to overflow with tenderness for every form of sorrow, was ready to help in every misfortune, and never suspected others. His pen was his only means of earning money, and he was not rich, but his benevolence never failed. As for his activity, that was ceaseless. He founded a number of newspapers, which he edited without assistance! He turned from one subject to the other with facility rather than with depth. Those who insulted him he freely pardoned, but, indeed, insults were not spared him when he was editing the *Siècle*.

As politics were practically a forbidden subject

\* It was stated that Enfantin had left a fortune of several million francs. Precise information on this point is contained in an extract from the letter written by his executor and given below:—

"The total of what he leaves to all, and for all, amounts to barely two hundred and twenty thousand francs. But during a period of nearly twenty years he had the satisfaction of giving away more than five hundred thousand francs. Had he deprived himself of this pious joy, what would it have profited him now?

"Signed, ALEX DUFOUR.

"11th Aug., 1864."

under the Second Empire, journalists had resorted to religious discussion. Sometimes Louis Jourdan was the aggressor.

His opponents retaliated by calling him an Atheist, an instrument of the devil, and even a Saint Simonian. He replied. The dispute grew bitter, and high words passed between the combatants. The strange thing is that Jourdan was extremely religious.

When he approached the Deity he was in a state of exaltation, in a kind of ecstasy. He would call upon God, plead with Him, and give Him thanks, nor did he conceal the fact. His little volume, "*Les Prières de Ludovic*," is a book of praise, such as no sect need disavow. He diligently read the New Testament, but had a marked preference for the Gospel according to St. John.

In the same group with *Enfantin*, *Lambert*, and *Jourdan*, I seem to perceive by the light of memory the smiling countenance of a man whose grey hair is hidden under a turban; he wears a loose coat, and speaks in gentle, rather thick tones.

I speak of *Dr. Perron*, who, because of his excessive modesty, never took his proper place in the world of science. He was glad to efface himself, and did it so effectually that he was lost sight of altogether. I know that he was a doctor, and that he went to Egypt to seek his fortune, but whether in the company of the Saint Simonians or summoned by *Clot Bey* I am unable to say. He was professionally skilful, highly cultivated and prudent. *Mohammed 'Ali* formed a school of medicine at *Abou Zabel* and placed *Perron* at the head of it. He was an indefatigable worker, and naturally did not spend much of his time in sleep. He learnt Arabic, and soon knew it well enough to be able to hold his own with the Sheiks of the Theological University of *El-Azar*. To his Arabic he added a knowledge of Persian, and thus had mastered the two literary languages of Islam. From that time he devoted all his leisure to the study of Oriental

literature. He covered the whole field of such knowledge; not only did he know the Koran, the poets, and the story-tellers, but works on medicine and history, and the writings of the Cabalists, and he laboured with the pertinacity of a Benedictine. Travel attracted him, and he would gladly have penetrated the unvisited regions of the country of the Nile in search of the secrets the dark continent might still withhold. But his health was delicate, and, like most writers, he disliked leaving home.

A certain trader called Mohammed el Tounsy, which means a native of Tunis, had traded in Darfour and Ouadäg, two great slave-producing regions.

If the Tunisian trafficked in slaves he never said so, and we may believe that he dealt only in elephants' teeth, gold dust, and gums. He had the complexion of a mulatto, and his journey across the desert had not made his complexion fairer. However, no sooner did he enter the black country than he became the object of universal admiration. The men of Darfour and Ouadäg said, "How pink and white he is! Certainly he cannot be old; he must be good to eat, let us kill and cook him."

Mohammed el Tounsy was somewhat disturbed, but he was dexterous enough to escape a negro saucepan. He was a taleb (writer), and carried an ink-bottle at his sash like the learned man he was. He gathered information, asked questions, took notes, and wrote the narrative of his journey as he went along.

Dr. Perron translated these travels and published them in two volumes, which give the strangest possible details. Most of the accounts we possess of the African races and of the petty tyrants who rule over them are from the pen of Europeans. We generally get the view of Aryan Christians judging coloured Muslim or idolatrous races. It is therefore interesting to know the opinion of a man of Semite origin firmly attached to Islamism. The point of view has completely changed, the Tunisian's remarks are very singular sometimes,

and the conclusions he draws are often strangely at variance with our own.

When Dr. Perron was weary of his stay in Egypt he returned to France. There he entered into relations with the Minister of War, who made use of his special knowledge and he produced his most important book.

It is well known that orthodox Muslims are divided into four sects, viz., the sect of the Hanafites, founded by Hanafy of Bagdad, to which belong the whole of Turkey in Europe and of Turkey in Asia; the Shâfiites, descended from Shâfi'y, and adopted in Egypt and in Syria; the Hanbalites sect, derived from Hambal and followed by the Chaldeans and the pashalik of Bagdad, and finally the sect of the Malekites, whose doctrine was spread by Malek over Barbary and the Soudan.

Algiers, like the other countries of the Moghreb (setting sun), belongs to the Malek division, which has its special religious formulas, its jurisprudence and peculiar customs.

Khalîl ibn Ishak wrote a voluminous treatise on Muslim jurisprudence as interpreted by the Malekite ritual. It contains the body of law with commentary and interpretation, which is obeyed by the Arabs scattered along the shores of the Mediterranean and beyond the desert of Sahara.

It was indispensable in the interests of our colonial administration of Algeria that a translation should be made of Khalîl ibn Ishak's work.

The task was confided to Dr. Perron. He performed it with an amount of learning and skill which should have thrown open to him the doors of the Institute or the Chair of Arabic at a university. This intensely interesting work consists of five volumes in 4to, and was printed at the Imprimerie Nationale, consequently it can only be a library book, whereas it should have been published in a portable form, and freely distributed among our officers in Algiers, to whom it would have been useful.

Perron had had an excellent idea, which unfortunately he was not able to carry out. He wished to continue Herbelot's "*Bibliothèque Orientale*," and to bring it up to date—that is to say, supplement it by the addition of all the traditions collected and all the historical discoveries of the past century. Dr. Perron possessed the requisite energy and ability for a work which would have been an invaluable contribution to history, but he lacked an editor. The book must have been in six 4to volumes and in double columns.

It was a serious undertaking which no publisher would risk, so Dr. Perron had to abandon his idea. His "*Femmes Arabes*" and the legend of "*Yousouf-ben-Yacoub*" should have induced the Minister of Public Instruction to give him some important work bearing on Oriental history or tradition. But nothing of the sort was done; in the eyes of those in authority he was merely a doctor, not an Arabic scholar, and he was sent to Alexandria as medical officer of health. Such a man should surely have been otherwise occupied than in watching for the approach of the plague or of cholera. Even there it must have seemed to his superiors that he had too much leisure, for they made him principal of a college for mixed races at Algiers. There, to my regret, he died, for I had grown to love him; but, before all things, I deplored that his power of work and his talents had not been put to a better use.

It was Perron who brought Dr. Cuny to my house. I say "Dr.," but he could not then be so called except by courtesy, as he was only a health officer. He had passed through the French Army as Assistant-Surgeon, had left it for some reason unknown to me, and had gone to Egypt, where he had married. He had read the travels of Mohammed el Tounsy, and dreamt only of going to Darfour and Ouadäg.

Then he returned to Paris, where he obtained his Doctor's degree without too much difficulty, when it was ascertained that he intended to exercise the



medical profession only beyond the Tropic of Cancer among blacks.

When the Sultan of Ouadäg learnt that a white traveller who had a great reputation as a doctor was visiting his dominions, he thought within himself, "This man must know how to make candles." He sent one of his Ministers with an escort to seize upon poor Cuny, and bring him before him.

Cuny followed the Minister. He was carefully watched, because he was thought to be a sorcerer. They saw him take a measurement by means of a sextant.

"What are you doing?" they questioned. "You try to find hidden treasures with that instrument?"

Cuny tried to assure them of his innocence, but he began again the next day.

The Minister, who carried an assegai by way of costume, threw up his head with a dissatisfied gesture. That metal triangle caused him uneasiness. On the same evening he tried to jump over a precipice, fell, and broke his leg.

He said to Dr. Cuny, "You have cast a spell over me," and ordered him to be impaled.

The Minister was borne to the feet of the Sultan of Ouadäg, to whom he explained how he had fulfilled his mission.

The Sultan exclaimed, "But then I shall have no candles!" and he commanded that the Minister should be beheaded.

A French traveller from Khartoum told me this story.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SPIRITUALISTS.

Said Panurge, "Au temps que les bestes parloyent, il n'y a pas trois jours" ("In the times when the animals talked, not three days ago"), the tables took to dancing, hats began to cut capers, as La Bruyère would have put it, card-tables chattered, and even baskets could not keep silence—I knew one in which the soul of Molière had taken up its abode. It is true that Molière's soul wrote comedies no manager would have accepted and complained of the bad taste of the age.

Everyone can remember this folly, which turned people's heads as well as the tables. In the 17th century we had the possession of the monks, in the 18th the convulsionists of Saint Médard, and in the 19th the spirit-rappers, which would seem to prove that one form of mania or another is proper to human nature.

Everybody was caught by the latest novelty, which was so new that Tertullian had denounced it in his own time, and people put themselves in communication with the dead. The initiated accused those of materialism who thought it strange the spirits should have no other means of communication except through the furniture. I was sometimes rather severely handled, but faith would not come to me, and I have remained a sceptic. However, these antics produced a new sect, the sect of the spiritists. It has its true believers and its photographers, who take likenesses of the shades, which

the Police Correctionnelle\* seizes upon occasionally. It has its prophet and apostle, who, in the opinion of ordinary mortals like you and me, are dead, but who, it would seem, are really dwelling in intermediate space, and interpret between deity and the initiated. All that was required of the faithful was plenty of imagination, a small amount of logic, a love of the marvellous, and an ample supply of credulity. Some really superior minds were deceived, among others Louis de Cormenin. Incapable of deception himself, he could not suspect it in others. During a brief period he became the dupe of a village gossip, who had culled a few historical curiosities out of the *Dictionnaire de Conversation*, and had confided them to her table.

Théophile Gautier, who had a taste for the supernatural, was somewhat disturbed by the Marquis de Mirville's† book. Flaubert shrugged his shoulders and said —

“In spite of the evidence of Greek vases, we may believe with confidence that the Pythoness's tripod at Delphi was nothing more nor less than a table that turned.”

Tessier du Motay, the chemist, a man of learning and of research, was completely fascinated, and spent whole days in conference with the spirits of famous men. He questioned them, and admired their replies with such perfect good faith that it was impossible to doubt his sincerity. He affirmed that the soul's education continued after death, because Lavoisier, whom he had evoked, and who was in touch with all the discoveries of modern chemistry, had stated that such was the case.

“Had I questioned Lavoisier,” I asked Tessier du Motay, “do you think he would have been as learned with me as with you?”

\* See the *Gazette des Tribunaux* of the 17th and 18th June, 1875. The number contains a report of the trial of a spiritist photographer. It is an interesting document.

† (Note 2 to page 112 in print). *Pneumatologie; des esprits et de leurs manifestations fluidiques par le Marquis Endes de Mirville*. 1 vol. in 8o. Paris, 1853.

"Certainly," he replied, which proves that he was thoroughly convinced.

He was so urgent that I should be present at some of his experiments that I went one morning to his immense laboratory, in the centre of which was a large stove littered with retorts, matrasses, and crucibles.

In a corner stood a small three-legged table, made of maple wood. It had the letters of the alphabet and the first numerals carved upon the top of it, and turned upon its axis. A stationary needle, like that used by macaroon sellers, was meant to act as a pointer to obliging spirits.

When I arrived Tessier du Motay was holding a conference with Frederick the Great, who was giving him information about spring guns and chamber arms, with which it was thought desirable to supply the army. When Frederick the Great had given his lesson, Tessier asked me who I should like to communicate with. I named Michael Angelo. The table was put in motion, and struck the floor twice with one of its feet. Michael Angelo was in an amiable mood, and in table language he announced, "Here I am!"

I talked with him for a long time, chiefly about painting. He spelt the name Ingres with an "h," and Delacroix with a "y," which did not surprise me. It will not do to quibble at trifles when dealing with ancient spirits. The things he told me about the artists and the art of the day have been repeated for the last twenty years in newspaper *feuilletons*, and were the commonplaces of criticism. At the invitation of Tessier du Motay, I sat down in front of the table and touched it carefully with my hands, my fingers apart and my thumbs touching one another.

"You will see," he said, "it will go of itself." Only it did not go at all.

After waiting twenty minutes, as the table had not departed from its customary silent attitude, Tessier grew impatient.

"You do not know how to set about it," he explained, and he took my place.

"Whom do you want to see?"

"Mohammed."

Rap! rap! The prophet's soul agitated the table, and he answered all my questions with the courtesy of a dweller in tents. At the same time I noted with surprise that he used expressions derived from the Fourierist repertory, which proves either that the spirits are in touch with recent events, or merely that Tessier once upon a time had been attracted by the Phalanstery.

I asked Mohammed why the pilgrims are bound to bury the parings of their nails in the valley of Mena. The explanation he gave me was not satisfactory.

I then said, "I should wish to question the prophet upon whom be the blessing of God respecting certain occult matters, but unless assured that he will give me an answer I do not care to open the subject."

Rap! rap!

Mohammed was a good-natured prophet; he promised to satisfy my curiosity.

I then said slowly and in a loud voice, so as not to be misunderstood, "Etneim ou etneim youbkou kem?" Mohammed was silent. I persisted. The poor table knew not which way to turn, and I did not care to be baffled. Three times I repeated the question, the table swayed about as if exhausted, and continued silent. I had said, "Two and two, how many does that make?" and Mohammed had not been able to reply "Arba" (four).

I would not go on any longer with the experiment. Tessier du Motay did not know how to account for the incident, which possibly was a punishment for my incredulity.

"Oh! man of little faith. Wherefore dost thou doubt?" His own faith was unshaken, and quite unconsciously he gave the table a slight impetus which he imagined he had himself received

from it. This circumstance gave me a bad name in the spirit world. I was looked upon as an unprincipled character, whose presence paralyzed the manifestations. I was anathema; the tables and the experts grew silent at my approach.

Gérard de Nerval did not share the prejudice of these illuminati, and came to my house, where he had discovered a revolving dumb-waiter with three trays one above the other. It had been made under Louis XVI., and once belonged to my grandmother.

The spirits were partial to this piece of dining-room furniture; they visited it and delivered discourses.

Gérard, with his gentle insanity, was charmed, and I took care not to differ from him. The personage he summoned most often, and who never failed to appear, was Adam, not the Adam of the dawn of life, spotless, wandering through Paradise, and sleeping with his forehead pressed against the flank of a panther, but Adam the Prevaricator, who had been driven out of Eden and taken refuge upon the mountain of Serendib, where he despaired of all things, but received from God by way of consolation the book of the Cabala, by means of which Moses, Joshua, Elijah, and Jesus performed their miracles. This book is now lost. The hierophant Toth was the last who had access to it, and therefore he became immortal. It was necessary to induce Adam to dictate the contents, and his complaisance was more remarkable than his perspicuity. I tried to help Gérard, of whom I was very fond, and who interested me.

We began with oburgations, for it was important that the inferior spirits should not come and disturb the confidential statements we were to receive from the Father of all men. Gérard de Nerval turned to the East, in the direction of the country of the Hemiarites, where the Patriarch's staff was buried, and cried out in a piteous voice, while I repeated after him, "Begone, Lilith," "Leave me, Nahéma!"

"No! Moloch! Thou shalt not have our children to devour." Once the better to neutralize the evil influence of the genii and the homonculæ he had brought some assafoetida. Rabelais would have said, "*Ça puait bien comene cinq cents charretées de diables*" ("It stank just like five hundred cart-loads of devils"), and the whole house was infected. Upon great occasions Gérard danced the dance of the goddess Derceto, who was Astarte in her fish form. To complete the ritual I should have faced him and danced the dance of Dag, the dragon with a serpent's tail, but I was not expert enough.

One day, when Gérard was performing Derceto's ecstatic figure in honour of Tanit, who is the moon, he struck his head against the corner of a bookcase. The blow somewhat moderated his transports of choregraphic mysticism. Gérard's real name was Labrunie. He adopted the name of Nerval and made it famous. He was mad, and even in the lucid intervals his madness made him eccentric and brought an element of disorder into his life. In the acute stages, when he was a source of danger to himself and others, he was taken away to Passy, the ancient house of the Duc de Penthièvre, then a private hospital managed by Dr. Blanche. There Gérard met with the most considerate hospitality, and the unfailing devotion of a friend. His attacks would sometimes reduce him to a state of coma, and sometimes excite him till he was in delirium. This condition did not last more than six months, and he recovered slowly like a man awakened from a dream. I often visited him in the retreat where they brought him back to reason. One day he said to me, "It is very kind of you to come and see me. Poor Blanche is mad; he imagines he is at the head of a private asylum, and we pretend to be mad in order to gratify him. You will take my place, I know, because to-morrow morning I must go to Chantilly, to marry Mme. de Feuchères."

Madame de Feuchères is remembered because she had a liaison with the last Prince of the house of

Condé, and likewise with a young painter called Ladurner, who left for Russia about the year 1831.

During another of his attacks Gérard found an inmate of the villa he was living in who suffered from a strange form of mental disease. He was a self-absorbed lunatic, with a tendency to incendiarism. He never spoke, would not open his mouth, and refused food. For six months Dr. Blanche was obliged to nourish him by artificial means.

Gérard conceived the idea that his companion had been frozen. He said to me, "Since the passage of the *Beresina* he has been like that. Blanche has charged me to thaw him." Then he rubbed his nose against that of the unhappy creature, and blew in his face.

The lunatic would draw back with a gesture of disgust, but he submitted. One day, however, the self-absorbed patient tried to strangle Gérard, who abandoned the idea that he could arrest the freezing process.

He sketched some very complicated drawings, coloured with the dye from flowers, to which he had appended explanatory notes. These drawings, which I have carefully preserved, are the most interesting specimens of insane draughtsmanship I know of, and were intended to illustrate and explain his peculiar cosmogony. They are a medley of literature, magic and the cabala, and are quite undecipherable. The whole revolves round a gigantic female figure with a nimbus composed of seven stars. Her feet rest upon the globe upon which writhes a dragon, and she represents Diana, Sainte Rosalie, and Jenny Colon. This confusion of ideas was natural in Gérard's case, for the memory of Jenny Colon took the form with him of a permanent delusion. It has been stated that the unrequited love he bestowed upon her had led him first to ruin, and afterwards to madness. This is legendary, but as the story was invented by Nerval himself it is not surprising that it was accepted and



repeated by his friends, and he had many friends because he was very gentle, and could be depended upon. The true reason is simpler, and it is enough to say that it is of a pathological character. Gérard de Nerval was never thoroughly sane. When, as an unattached student, he was following the course of instruction in the second division of the rhetoric class of the Collège Charlemagne, he would sometimes betake himself to the Ile Louvier, which still existed, and was covered with building yards. With the help of planks and fagots he contrived to build himself a hut, in which he lived for several days together. He bought food at the neighbouring fruiterer's, and crossed backwards and forwards to the island over the stakes by permission of the workmen, whom he treated with drink. Later on he lived with Arsène Houssaye, Camille Rogier, and Théophile Gautier in the old house of the Doyenné cul-de-sac. He has told the story of this part of his existence in "*La Bohème Rose*." One day towards sunset, at Montmartre, upon the terrace of a house built in the Italian style, he saw an apparition and heard a voice call him. He sprang to meet it, fell down, and remained unconscious from the shock, which was enough to kill him. They took him to Dr. Blanche's asylum, and that was his first well-marked attack of insanity with hallucinations of the senses of hearing and of sight. After that incident he could never be sure of himself. His mind at times seemed to slumber, to wander, and to rouse itself, according to the irresponsible dictates of his nervous system, and his nervous system had been unhinged from the beginning.

This tattered, slovenly little man, whom we only knew in his broken-down condition, had once been luxurious in his habits. He had inherited some fifty thousand francs, and had bought himself fine clothes and straw-coloured gloves. He had fallen in love with Jenny Colon, a pink and white plump actress, with fair hair of doubtful authenticity, and

not much refinement, who had a certain degree of success in the Vaudeville of the Opéra-Comique. Gerard worshipped her, but from a distance, like most men who are afflicted with the erotic form of insanity. The contemplation of the adored being suffices them as a rule; they are the Don Quixotes of harmless madness. He had hired an orchestra stall for the season at the theatre where his Dulcinea, whose Tobose was no inaccessible kingdom, then acted. Each evening he sent her a bouquet from Mme. Prévot's, the florist then fashionable. He bought different kinds of opera-glasses that he might observe her the more narrowly, and richly-mounted canes with which he hammered the floor of the house in her honour. I once asked Théophile Gautier how it was Gérard had ruined himself. "By the excesses in canes he committed, and by his extravagance in the matter of opera-glasses," Gautier answered.

He had also discovered a very beautiful renaissance bed in a *bric-à-brac* shop. He purchased it in the hope that Jenny Colon might repose in it some day. To contain the bed he hired an apartment, which he furnished with old oak chests, Gothic chairs, episcopal stalls, and mediæval *prie-Dieus*. When he fell into distress the furniture was sold piece by piece, and only the bed was kept. That he might store it carefully Gérard took first a smaller apartment, then one room, and finally a garret. This bed of itself ensured him a shelter for the night. When it had to go to the second-hand shop Gérard took to a vagrant life. Sometimes he passed the night on a bench in the open, sometimes in the markets, at Paul Niquet's inn, and in those doubtful places which bear the inscription, "*Ici on loge à la nuit*" ("Lodging for the night").

He was known to the police, who regulate these houses. Once Gérard had stopped upon the Boulevard to talk with two or three of his friends at the corner of the Michodière. A policeman came up and asked for his papers. He wished to know

where he worked. Nerval worked everywhere, now at Gautier's house, now at mine, in dark taverns, which he gladly frequented, in the streets, under the trees of the Tuileries Gardens, in the public reading-rooms, and in doorways!—in all places except at home, for he had no home. He wrote on scraps of paper, on old envelopes, and on newspaper wrappers, sometimes with ink and sometimes with pencil. His manuscripts were extraordinary productions, and quite evidence enough of the disturbed condition of his mind. Nevertheless, he had talent of a refined and remarkable kind, and there is a certain distinction about all he wrote. Jenny Colon, when he was no longer able to see her, became for him a sort of mental apparition, which never left him. Amid the confusion of ideas the Cabala and his magical studies had left upon his brain he confounded her with goddesses, saints, and even stars. One day he imagined that she must be the incarnation of Saint Theresa. It is doubtful whether she ever knew of the chaste transports she had inspired in Gérard. One evening at Brussels Théophile Gautier spoke of him to her. Her reply was, "I never saw him but once. Then he came and made an offer to write me an opera called 'The Queen of Sheba.' The music was to be Meyerbeer's. I received bouquets, but did not exactly know who they came from. In the green-room I heard the story gossiped about, but I never took much heed of it. Do not accuse me of having made him suffer. When the man who loves is dumb, she who is beloved must be deaf. Tell your friend Gérard de Nerval that I am innocent of all blame in the matter."

Gautier, who told me the story, repeated this conversation to Gérard, whose answer was a strange one. "What good would it have been to me," he said, "if she had loved me?" Then he quoted from Heine, "'He who loves for the second time without hope is a fool;' I am a fool. The heavens, the sun, and the stars laugh at my folly. I, too, laugh at it; I laugh, but I am dying."

Gautier added, "He has always been mad!" That was my own opinion, and the brain specialists agreed with me upon that point.

In December, 1854, there was sufficient evidence that the symptoms of insanity had returned. Gérard's ideas became incoherent, and the contents of the Cabala and the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception jostled one another in his brain, and produced a confusion which often ended in attacks of delirium. This being, usually so childlike and gentle, had fits of violence of which he could feel the approaches, although he was unable to control them. An attempt was made to take him back to the care of Dr. Blanche, who ever received him with the greatest kindness, but he escaped and disappeared for several weeks, no one knew where at the time. He was seen at Creil, where he stayed two days in a drinking-place frequented by workmen. When he returned he was calmer, although it was thought advisable to deprive him of a knife with a bone handle and a long pointed blade, that had cost him thirteen sous, a dangerous weapon, with which he had threatened one of his friends. Whenever he had any money he wandered about the *quais* and searched the dealers' shops for coins, and *méreaux*; \* he bought all the coins he could find with the portrait of the Emperor Nerva. He declared he would not allow the likeness of his ancestor to be passing through mercenary hands. He was never altogether short of money. There were three places he was always able to apply at when in need, and as his demands were modest—he never asked for more than 20 francs at a time—he feared no refusal.

I saw him for the last time on Saturday, the 20th January, 1855. Paris was wrapped in snow. Théophile Gautier was with us at the office of the *Revue*

\* *Méreaux* were leaden tokens which the French Protestants of the XVII. and XVIII. centuries received from their pastors, and which admitted them to the Holy Communion. On the obverse was an open Bible illuminated by the sun, and on the reverse a desert plain, by way of allusion to the Church in the Desert.—TRANS.

*de Paris*, where he had come to talk over "Capitaine Fracasse," the book he was beginning to think of writing.

Gérard entered the room. He wore a thin black coat, so that in such weather it made me shudder to look at him. I said to him —

"You are very thinly clad for facing such cold as this."

"Oh, no," he replied, "I am wearing two shirts; nothing can be warmer."

Gautier, who, as an old schoolfellow and literary friend, could venture to speak more freely, rejoined —

"It is snowing pleurisies and quinsies. There are men here who have several great-coats, and would be happy to lend you one for the rest of your life."

"No," Gérard said, "the cold is bracing. The Laps are never ill."

He began to speak of Foulques Nerra, whose history he wished to write, because he was descended from him in the direct line. The male members of his family, he likewise told us, were born with Solomon's tetragon traced on the left side of the breast just below the heart. Then suddenly interrupting himself, he said —

"I have purchased a very rare object, but tradesmen are such fools that they do not understand the value of their goods. I will show it you. It is the girdle Mme. de Maintenon wore when she acted at Saint Cyr in 'Esther.'"

He then carefully unfolded a ragged piece of paper and drew out a kitchen apron string made of unbleached linen, and which looked perfectly new. Gautier and I exchanged glances. We all three went out into the bitter weather together. The wheels of the carriages creaked as they crushed the snow under them. Gautier said —

"Gérard, I will give you a *risotto*; come and dine with me," but he refused.

Then I interposed —

"It is very cold ; there is a room for you at my house."

He drew a twenty-franc piece out of his pocket, which I still seem to see ; it had just been given him, and bore the draped bust of Louis XVIII., and the date 1814.

"Thank you," he said, "I want for nothing. I have my week's wage."

He left us lest we should insist, evidently. The next time I saw him was in the inner room of the Morgue, stretched out naked under a zinc coverlet.

On Friday, the 26th January, very early in the morning, Théophile Gautier sent to tell me that Gérard had been found hung in the Rue de la Vieille Sauterne. A Commissary of Police, who had been a warder at the Collège Saint Louis when I ran away from it, and who was named Blanchet, had the body removed, and sent for Gautier and Arsène Houssaye to prove its identity.

Gautier, who was warmly attached to Gérard, was deeply moved.

The body had been carried to the Morgue, and it was easy to see it. Poor Gérard lay upon his back, his eyes were closed, his tongue touched his half-open mouth, the fingers were turned in. The expression of his face was calm, his head slightly turned over his shoulder, and his feet were pointed outwards. There were no traces of violence, not a bruise or an abrasion. Round his neck a brown, rather than red, mark indicated the pressure of that very apron string he had shown me six days ago, and which he mistook in his madness for the Marquise de Maintenon's girdle.

There could be no doubt about it. Gérard had committed suicide. The hypothesis of murder could not be entertained for a moment by the Commissary of Police, or by the skilful experts at the Morgue, or by the official doctor who examined the body. Nevertheless, the term assassination was used almost at once, but under special circumstances which deprived it of the importance which has since

been attached to it. When the religious service had to be arranged at Notre Dame it was stated that the body for which the prayers of the Church were required was that of a suicide. The priest in charge of the services wished to have the details, which were told him. After listening to them attentively he asked —

“Did anyone see this unhappy man hang himself?”

“No.”

“Then,” said the priest, “it is our duty to infer that he was the victim of a crime.”

The funeral took place on the 30th January, in the presence of a considerable crowd. Théophile Gautier, who was suffering from an abscess in the throat, was there with his head muffled in a yellow shawl, which brought out the pallor of a countenance discomposed by grief.

At this time there were rumours afloat which were accepted without inquiry by the idle public. Lately an attempt has been made to revive them. It has been said that Gérard was killed and robbed by ruffians who fastened his body to a railing, so as to suggest the idea of suicide. This is a mistake. Gérard hung himself because he was mad, and because there never was a madman, however gentle, gay, or harmless he may have appeared, to whom the idea of suicide has not occurred at some given moment, perhaps when it was least expected. That is a fact writers on mental disease have never questioned. In the case of Gérard full inquiry was made.

The manner in which he had spent the previous evening and the night, up to three o'clock in the morning, had to be traced out, and a summary of the circumstances was given in a report which the authorities were right not to publish. Thirteen years later this report fell into my hands, and was destroyed when the Communists' fires were lighted. According to the report Gérard had dined at half-past five in one of the taverns of the Halles (market

place). During the evening he had been seen in three houses. At about two in the morning he exchanged some words with a group of policemen who were crossing the Place Baudoyer. He was dressed in the black coat I had seen him wear, and wore a high-crowned hat. There were eighteen degrees of frost that night. At last he grew tired and went to sleep in the Rue de la Vieille Lanterne, where he knew of a lodging-house—ten centimes charged for the right to lie down on the straw. The Rue de la Vieille Lanterne has been destroyed. It was an alley constructed in mediæval times, and similar to those which run parallel to the walls of Saint-Jean-d'Acre. Through it ran an open gutter, which took its rise in the Rue Planche-Mibras, dipped down at the bottom of the Rue de la Tuerie, and where it communicated, by means of a flight of six steps, with the Place du Châtelet. A tame crow used to stand about all day on these steps and say, "I am thirsty."

A sewer, which had its origin in the Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie Market and emptied itself into the Seine at the Quai de Gesvres, passed by two openings through double gateways, one on the right and one on the left into the Rue de la Vieille Lanterne. The two gateways faced one another and were connected by a strong iron grating. It was a sinister spot enough, with a cut-throat as well as a vicious reputation in the neighbourhood. Here in 1848 one of the chiefs of the June insurrection had established his headquarters. Above the bay formed by the walls set close together the gilded Victory of the du Châtelet column could be seen like some divinity soaring away from this sink of iniquity. There was but one house in the street, an inn, a lodging-house, a haunt of every kind, "lodgings for the night."

Gérard de Nerval knocked at this door towards three in the morning. The inmates were sleeping heavily in the close air. Without, it was intensely cold. No one stirred. For a long time, for more



than a quarter of an hour, according to the report, Gérard knocked, but the inhospitable door did not open. Not a creature stirred to let in a poor fellow who needed a shelter from the glacial darkness and who was dropping with fatigue. He lost heart, and went to sit on the steps which overlook the Rue de la Tuerie. There, probably, he fell asleep. When he woke up what were the thoughts which passed through his mind? His secret died with him. Did he see, as in a vision, his wretchedness and exhaustion, and his uncertain existence, threatened always by insanity or by poverty? And did that make him decide to be done with it? Is it not possible that nervous excitement, increased by the abuse of alcohol, may have presented him with hopes of another existence, such as the science of magic suggests? Did he make his prayer to Trismegistus, or invoke the spirit of the universe into which he longed to be absorbed? These are questions I cannot answer.

He fastened his string to the transverse bar of the grating, slipped his head through it, pulled his hat down over his eyes, and let himself go. His feet were touching the pavement. Death, or rather unconsciousness, must have been rapid, for no distortion had deformed the features. It was proved that strangulation had taken place. A rag and bone man saw him hanging there just as the day began to break, and gave notice to the police. In his pockets they found papers, which served to identify him, and also the two sous he had kept that he might sleep under shelter.

Gérard de Nerval, in spite of his vagrant, homeless life, so objectless and lawless, was a being of unusual delicacy and refinement. Diderot's saying, "His was a charming soul," might have been written of him.

When insanity had temporarily abandoned her prey a kind of dreaminess which was very touching seemed to take its place. Even in his sanest moments he was still the ecstatic dreamer. Had he

not put an end to his days he would doubtless have been completely paralyzed. Already he was beginning to entertain ideas of his own grandeur, and would talk of the castles he meant to build at Ermenonville. He began to make inquiries as to the price of the property of Mortefontaine, and only a fortnight before his death he assured me that the attendants at Dr. Blanche's establishment were astounded at his beauty when they gave him his bath.

Self-conceit and delusions about personal grandeur are the preliminary symptoms of mental paralysis. When Eugène Forcade described a Bourse speculation to me one day, which was to bring him in seven million francs in twenty-four hours, I knew that he was a lost man.

Gérard was born on the 21st May, 1808, and therefore was not yet forty-seven years of age when he died. Owing to his infirmity, and the ill-regulated life which was one of its consequences, he seemed more like a man of sixty. In his calm moments he was timid and deferential in manner, but when his spirit was disturbed and could find no resting-place, he became defiant and aggressive, sometimes even quarrelsome.

On one occasion I was calling upon Gautier when Gérard appeared, very angry and excited.

"I have come to bid you farewell," he said; "I am about to start for Guernsey to tell Hugo what I think of him. I have just discovered that he has dishonoured us all.

In vain we tried to calm him.

"Yesterday I re-read the 'Pas d'Armes du Roi Jean.' He says in it :

" ' Force aieules,  
Portan gueules,  
Sur azur.'

Is he not aware that it is forbidden in heraldry to put enamel upon enamel, metal upon metal, or fur on fur upon a coat, except in a case of false arms?

It is a disgrace to the romantic school, and it has fallen to my lot to avenge it. As soon as I have collected three hundred francs I mean to embark at Granville and to call out the Olympian."

As, however, the three hundred francs were not to be found, Gérard forgot his anger.

He had left a portion of his papers at Dr. Blanche's house. After his death, Arsène Houssaye, Gautier, and I examined them to see if some of them were suitable for publication. We found only a mass of papers which contained no unpublished matter. Among other things, there were verses for "Piquillo," fragments of articles written for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and for the *Artiste*; likewise the manuscript of his "Nuits du Ramadan," a long Oriental and fantastic novel the *Nationale* had printed in 1850. We were much surprised to find that at least a quarter of these manuscripts were not in Gérard's handwriting, but in that of Francis Wey. It was not easy for Gérard, in the midst of his unsettled life, to get through his daily task, for his *feuilletons* were paid at so much a line, and according to the requirements of the paper. He spoke to Francis Wey about this difficulty, and Wey, with the greatest kindness and delicacy, at once offered his services. It is easy to give money, but rarer to give time and labour and look for no return, either of a direct or indirect kind.

Had not the manuscript of the "Nuits du Ramadan" been seen by us this rare act of generosity would have remained unknown. I have thought it right to reveal it.\*

Notwithstanding the intervals of silence occasioned by his illness, Gérard de Nerval was very productive. Among his books there is one which has a purely scientific interest. He wrote, shortly before his death, a story called "Aurelia ou le Rêve de la Vie," which is a sort of legacy or confession of a madman's state of mind. It is, as it

\* Francis Wey died in Paris on the 9th March, 1882, aged sixty-nine.

were, insanity taken in the act related in a lucid moment by one who is himself insane. This confession, which retails the wanderings of delirium, is perfectly sincere. Madness, especially the form which takes possession of the whole being, and this form often attacked Gérard, presents the most extravagant drama to the eye of the mind. The ideas meet and mingle in the wildest confusion, dreams are mistaken for realities or confounded with them, sensation and sentiment are not distinguished the one from the other, and thoughts take the place of actions, and all this with such intensity and violence that the spirit's power of resistance must, it would seem, inevitably give way. Gérard embodied these mental dramas, known only to the patient, and not even guessed at by others, in his book and gave them to the world.

Every student of mental disease who cares to know how these morbid phenomena are produced and developed in the brain of a madman should study this book. It is a pathological analysis of the highest order; indeed, it is more than that, it is the careful self-dissection of a spirit which has lost control over itself, and of the phantoms which torment it. The intangible is made tangible, and that which appeared mist and cloud is given a solid form. I am acquainted with several books which try to solve the mystery of madness, among others, with Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "Dialogues," the "Reliquiæ" of Dr. Charles Lefebvre, and "Ma Loi d'Avenir" by Claire Desmare, a Saint Simonian who killed herself and her lover in 1832. But I know nothing which can compare with this study in the pathology of mental disease, although here and there it may seem to contradict previous experience.

It is not a work of the imagination, but imagination itself revealing its own disorders and losing the sense of control and of responsibility.

Gérard was by no means the only literary man whose reason went astray in my day. Not to speak of Armand Barthet, author of the "*Moineau de*

Leslie," whom I never fell in with, and who was taken to Charenton, I remember Paul Deltuf, whose delicate, cold, and rather reserved gift was not appreciated by the multitude, but gave pleasure to a fastidious few. He was small and melancholy, or rather sullen. He had a small, pinched face, with attractive dark eyes, which had a most pathetic expression sometimes. He limped, and seemed ashamed of his infirmity, although he made no attempt to hide it. He was not without means. It was said that some fifteen thousand French livres a year allowed him to develop his powers at will, to take his leisure, and to work at the hours which best suited him, besides enabling him to bring himself into notice. He was ambitious, and dreamt of literary success. But his rather cold imagination was not formed to ensure him a wide popularity.

If he cared for fame he cared for love also. Poor fellow, he made a bad choice. There are some exquisitely cut phials which contain dangerous poisons.

"Rustighello! Beware! Do not touch the gold phial!"

He did touch it, and what a dream was his! He imagined that he had discovered a woman who was an "angel," and at the same time an intelligent companion, skilled in abstract speculation; that the ladder by which a man reaches the Seventh Heaven may be also the approach to the Temple of Plutus; that he was about to become both rich and famous. One leg shorter than the other, what need that matter? If he has wings to fly with should a man grumble because he walks lame? In a very short time he was ruined and had been turned out of doors.

The siren of speculation had sung with the sweetest of voices, and Paul Deltuf had been devoured. Then he realized that he had been made a fool of, that love was only the bait he had swallowed while he was being robbed, and his wrath and his sorrow were aroused.

To avenge himself he wrote the "Pigeons de la Bourse," which is his own story rather than a novel. Without their masks all the personages could be identified. The blow was too severe for Deltuf, and too unexpected. He had lost both his fortune and his illusions, and found himself face to face with possible poverty, as well as struggling with agonized feelings. Bitter memories were all he retained of the past.

When the strongest natures have been drawn into the slough of despond they may well sink down, and this unhappy man's nature was a weak one. Life became unendurable; he fancied people were laughing at him, and he loathed his lameness. The sound of his cane as it struck the pavement was like a perpetual irony of fate.

Deltuf wished to force the world to recognize the superiority of his gifts, to prove that novel-writing had been only a youthful fancy upon his part, and that he was capable of being a great historian. He wrote a history of Machiavelli, which nobody read. His mental infirmity increased; he wanted to investigate the sources of mediæval history; primitive heroes had an attraction for him, and like many another he tried to reinaugurate the statues of Atilia and Theodoric of Verona. His brain was completely turned, and he began to have delusions about his own greatness. Sometimes he wished to kill himself, and would write thus to his friends—"Farewell, I am about to kill myself." On other occasions he imagined that he was immensely wealthy, and wrote—"Come quickly; I have three millions at your service!"

He would behead portraits with a razor, and as he was becoming dangerous he was removed to Clermont and placed in the lunatic asylum kept by the brothers Labitte. There he was completely paralyzed, passed into the vegetative phase of existence, and died.

Whether he went mad because he was ruined, or was ruined because the mad desire of riches had

taken hold upon him, and he sought to gain by gambling upon the Bourse that which should be the reward of industry, it is impossible to say. I do not pretend to understand brain disease, but I know what those who do understand it would think. I am disposed to believe that if he had not abandoned his industrious habits or tempted fate he might have escaped ruin and disillusion, madness and incarceration in that melancholy abode where death came to release him.

It was through Gustave Flaubert, who took an interest in his literary talent, that I became acquainted with Deltuf. Neither in the working of their minds nor in their mode of execution did they resemble one another, and yet that mysterious bond existed between them which often unites the most dissimilar natures.

Flaubert had at length decided to have a home in Paris, and he rented an apartment in a house on the Boulevard du Temple, the site of that in which Fieschi had set up his infernal machine.

Here he passed six months of the year. We were in 1856. The internal administration of the country remained unchanged. The press was still in bondage to the decree of the 17th February, 1852. The subscribers to the *Moniteur Universel* continued to grow in number, and no single issue of the journal was poorly provided with advertisements, as the *Revue de Paris* very well knew.

Louis de Cormenin, who had married in the month of March, 1854, sent an occasional article to the *Journal du Loiret*, and seemed to be taking a rather Platonic interest in literature. Flaubert was writing the last chapters of "Madame Bovary;" Bouilhet had just finished his first five act drama written in verse, "Madame de Montarcy." Théophile Gautier wrote the *Moniteur's* dramatic *feuilleton*, and was still meditating his novel "Capitaine Fracasse." We lived in close intimacy, often met during the week, and on Sundays we dined at the same table. A charming woman pre-

sided, and I was in the habit of seeing on these occasions Eugène Delacroix, Henri Monnier, Chénard, the painter, Ricard and Auguste Préault, not to speak of several living writers, and of a distinguished composer now a member of the Institute. We spent thus many delightful hours which had in them the thrill of departing youth. We discussed a great many subjects, and went from gay to grave.

Each of us had his hobby like Uncle Toby. Gautier, Flaubert, and Bouilhet had the same, viz., art for art. I often heard myself called a barbarian and a renegade, but I did not take offence.

In this company the doctrine was preached, and the preaching enforced by example, that the artist is higher than the man, and when I ventured to assert that such a theory would result in the production of decorative work only I was told I was a bureaucrat, which was a terrible insult, of course.

"In literature," they affirmed, "no one should reveal his thought. If the author's opinions come out in a novel then the novel should be committed to the flames. The author should be absolutely impersonal, think and act through his characters alone, otherwise he proves that he does not know his trade. The descriptive powers are strengthened by the study of contrasts, a hungry man can best describe a good dinner, and an account of the burning Sahara will be the more graphic if he be shivering with cold. No product of the imagination can be too exaggerated, because its conceptions are as valuable as facts. The subject of a work of art is of no importance whatever, but only the form the artist gives it. Let him paint equally well a snail crawling on a cabbage or Apollo gazing at Venus, and the one work will be worth as much as the other."

La Bruyère was a great writer, not because of what he said, but because of his way of saying it. What is it to be a writer of genius? Surely, to know how to work out a comparison, to avoid hackneyed expressions, to use the auxiliary verb



only as a last resource, and to try to find words which paint the subject. It is vulgar to say "*Ses cheveux blonds étaient ondulés*" ("That a person had undulating fair hair"), but fine to say, "*Sa chevelure se crespelait d'or*" ("her hair crisp like gold"). Now and then, to make the Philistines open their eyes (*épater le bourgeois*) it is well to use expressions they do not understand. For example, in making the portrait of a woman it might be judicious to introduce such a sentence as the following: "*La taroupe soyeuse et ses sourcils murzuphlisés augmentaient la fulguration de son regard*" ("the silken hair between and her eyebrows added to the force of her fulgurating glance"). The sentences ought to be incisive, and the imagery should be bold and striking; as to their meaning it were servile to trouble oneself.

To care about the ideas in writing poetry or any form of literature is as if a man were to cook pumpkins in a golden bowl. An artist should be a Pagan and care only for form.

And then someone would tell how Cardinal Bembo made his chamberlain read the breviary on his account lest his own Latin should suffer. These paradoxes had become as valuable as any other commonplace sayings, although intended to combat the commonplace, but they were part of the creed, and those who did not conform were heretics. I had long been accounted a heretic, and had given up these discussions, which I regarded as fruitless. I admit no creed in art, only different dispositions and gifts. I admire beauty wherever I may find it, and I am convinced that theories of art are the natural outcome of the defects as well as of the qualities peculiar to those who construct them. I generally listened in silence, but when Gautier waxed warm and exclaimed, "My verses are like knights of gold galloping upon a brazen bridge," I joined in the applause. Flaubert would then ask "What do you think of Molière?" to which Gautier replied, "He may, perhaps, have been a fairly good

upholsterer, but as a poet that Poquelin was a poor wretch we should have hissed off the stage had he appeared in 1830."

Flaubert demurred, and said, "I think you are rather severe; he wrote some fine things."

Gautier next assumed a tragic air, and burst out, "Do not speak of that fellow in my presence. He deserved hanging for his confused similes. Flaubert, how can you, who have some idea of style, endure such a barbarism as that without nausea?"

*'Et par un doux hymen couronner en Valere,  
La flamme d'un amant généreux et sincère?'*

Do you venture to admit that a flame can be crowned? Beware! Such a heresy might be dangerous."

Flaubert had to allow that Molière was sometimes in fault, but he hastened to add, "There is one saying in the '*Malade Imaginaire*' which displays genius, and shows that he is a writer of wide range. He writes, '*Ce sont des Egyptiens vêtus en Maure qui font des danses mêlées de chansons.*' ('Egyptians in Moorish dress perform dances to the accompaniment of their songs.') That is a gem."

If Racine was referred to there was no limit to the abuse, and Flaubert, according to his mood at the time, would indulge either in an explosion of laughter or of rage, and repeat the line —

*"De ton horrible aspect purger tous mes états."*

Purge a state! Purge away an aspect or appearance!

Let me spare the reader the humorous comparisons which followed this outburst.

"All the same," said Flaubert, dolefully, "Racine wrote the finest line in the whole of French poetry, a line which is immortal because it is sublime."

"Which line?"

Flaubert drew himself up to the full extent of

his tall figure, and shouted in his most metallic accents—

“ La fille de Minos et de Pasphaé ! ”

One day during dinner Flaubert spoke of the “ Messéniennes ” with admiration. Gautier turned pale, touched a carving-knife near him, and said, “ Flaubert, you very nearly died ! ”

About this time, towards the end of the autumn of 1856, Flaubert was in a very excited state of nerves, for Bouilhet’s play was being rehearsed at the Odéon, and he was scarcely ever away from the theatre. He had established himself there permanently, and the new surroundings not only interested but absorbed him.

He strode about the stage, had the parts rehearsed to him, corrected mistakes of gesture and of voice, placed and replaced the characters, and addressed everybody in the second person singular, supernumeraries, carpenters, actors, and prompter alike. The building resounded with the tumult he created round him. Had the play been his instead of Bouilhet’s he could not have worked harder to make it succeed. He had realized the gravity of the case. If his play collapsed Bouilhet would collapse with it, or, rather, return to his provincial life as a teacher of Latin, and sink back into depression and poverty.

His zeal and devotion were admirable, and even his skill, for in spite of the surface violence of his character he had not been born in Normandy for nothing, and could be astute when circumstances required it. Influential critics were flattered, and acquaintance was made with students at the colleges, for these young men sometimes constitute a formidable public. Nothing was to be left to chance, and Flaubert worked unremittingly.

Bouilhet left everything to him, followed Flaubert about like his shadow, but was far from feeling confident. His natural timidity seemed to increase in the turmoil which surrounded him. He was

bewildered, and more than once I saw him break down in an hysterical fit of weeping.

How little does the spectator who sits indifferent on a first night in his orchestra stall, looks at the ladies through an opera-glass, criticises the actors, chats with his neighbours, barely gives his attention to the piece, and goes away yawning, realize the agonies the unhappy author has endured in preparing for an evening upon which his whole future may depend. A good deal of talent is required to write even a poor play. It is a crime to make a disturbance, to plot against the success of a young author, or to refuse to give him a hearing. If Victorien Sardou did not die of the failure of his "Taverne des Etudiants," which was an excellent comedy in verse, I can only say it was a marvel.

On the 6th November, 1856, the curtain rose upon "Madame de Montarcy" for the first time at the Odéon.

I need scarcely say that I was there in great excitement, watching and listening, and breathing a sigh of relief each time the curtain fell upon an act which had been brought to a close without a hitch. Bouilhet was on the stage, behind one of the wings. He was overpowered, incapable of hearing the applause, which he mistook for hisses. Like a frightened child he seized hold of my arm and begged me not to leave him.

However, everything went well. The verse was rich and sonorous, the actors were good, and the audience sympathetic. The clapping was spontaneous, and needed no encouragement from the "claque." Nothing could restore poor Bouilhet, the emotion was too much for his nerves.

The piece had a great success, and a run of seventy nights. It was a drama in verse, and belonged to the romanticist school of art. Its plot was more gloomy than I could have wished, and was worked out to the end with fatalistic logic. It contained one anomaly, which happily did not

compromise the success of the play, but was like a page of Saint Simon put into verse by a disciple of Victor Hugo. Historical accuracy and local colouring gained nothing by it, but as the poetry was fine, what more could be desired? By way of imitating *Hernani*, *Ruy Blas*, and the *Burgraves* a political tirade had been introduced, and Louis XIV. spoke in somewhat strange terms —

“ Vous entendrez rugir une de ces batailles,  
Où les peuples entiers se mordent aux entrailles,  
Un combat formidable aux cris désespérés,  
Dout parleront long temps les hommes effarés ;  
Car nous saurons du moins, si notre France expire,  
Lui creuser un tombeau plus large qu’un Empire.”

The composition of the lines was fine; they merited the applause they obtained. Gautier, Flaubert, le Comte de —, and myself escorted Bouilhet home in the middle of the night. He was restless and rather miserable. “Are you quite sure the piece was not a failure?” He did not recover himself until he had rested for two days. Then he was able to rejoice with Flaubert, who was in radiant spirits. These two friends and fellow-workers emerged from obscurity together, for while Bouilhet’s first play was being applauded at the Odéon, the *Revue de Paris* was bringing out Gustave Flaubert’s first novel.

## CHAPTER VI.

### PUBLIC AND RELIGIOUS MORALITY.

WHEN Louis Bouilhet died in the July of 1869, Flaubert wrote, "To me his loss is irreparable. Yesterday I buried my brain, my literary conscience, and my compass." This was no exaggerated, momentary explosion of grief, but the statement of a fact. Bouilhet was, in truth, Flaubert's conscience. When he strayed from the right path Bouilhet remonstrated, was not to be quieted or silenced. This fact, which often came under my own observation, was most honourable to both friends, and does not mean that Bouilhet's talent was equal to that of Flaubert. Bouilhet certainly could never have written "*Madame Bovary*," "*Salambô*," "*A Cœur Simple*," "*Saint Julien l'Hospitalier*" or "*Herodias*," any more than Flaubert could have written "*Melænis*" or the "*Fossiles*."

Bouilhet seemed to shrink from prose; he used to say, "It is like an ever-flowing river. How is one to stop it?" Flaubert, as I have already said, was incapable of writing verse, but because of their dissimilarity each seemed the complement of the other. With Flaubert, the harmony of his prose took the place of poetry, which he found in the musical vibration of words, if I may be permitted the expression. Anyone who ever heard him read a single sentence would bear me out in this. It was easy to note the excessive importance he attached to the rhythm of the words in his pro-

nunciation, the modulation of his voice, and the use of accents. Sometimes he changed the sound of a word altogether. Bouilhet, accustomed to the measure and harmony of verse, looked for other qualities in style.

Then his critical powers had been strengthened and refined by his study of classical models. He knew that though the marvellous and the fantastic are important factors in poetry, they must only be admitted into the novel with the greatest reserve. The novel bears a certain resemblance to history, because its object is to relate imaginary facts in such a way as to give them the appearance of reality. Therefore he watched over Flaubert and kept him from those errors his love of a rhetorical style sometimes led him into. The "Tentation de Saint Antoine" had been a striking illustration of this tendency.

"Madame Bovary" and "Salambô" were written under Bouilhet's eye; had he been alive when "l'Education Sentimentale" was published in 1870 the book would certainly have undergone considerable modifications. Bouilhet did not add a word to "Madame Bovary," but he cut away many superfluous sentences and thus rendered Flaubert a signal service. Let me give an example. Flaubert, who had been struck by a toy that he had seen, had a fancy to introduce this toy into his book and to represent the children of the apothecary Homais amusing themselves with it. The description of this toy, which represented, I believe, the court of the King of Siam, took up at least ten pages. Flaubert and Bouilhet contended over this plaything for a week, but finally good sense triumphed, and the toy disappeared from the book, where it had served only to impede the action, and was a most useless accessory.

One of Bouilhet's sayings was, "However beautiful in itself an excrescence may be, if you put it on Venus's shoulders she will be hump-backed; therefore cut off excrescences."

It was not always easy to get Flaubert to listen to reason. He defended himself invariably with the nervous energy it was so desirable not to excite in his case. But Bouilhet in teaching children had acquired a degree of patience which seemed inexhaustible.

To see them together, to hear Flaubert talking loudly and angrily, rejecting every suggestion and impatient under contradiction, whereas Bouilhet's manner was gentle, almost humble, and slightly sarcastic, as he turned aside furious speeches with a jest, one would have imagined Flaubert a tyrant who had conquered Bouilhet. Nothing of the kind! In literary matters, at least, Bouilhet ruled and Flaubert obeyed. In vain would he rebel, hammer the table, and declare that he would not change a single syllable. Bouilhet remained immovable, slowly inhaled his pinch of snuff, and said, "You will remove that incident because it is useless to the development of your plot, and under the circumstances whatever is useless must be harmful." Flaubert always yielded in the end, and never repented having done so.

Flaubert spent three years in writing "*Madame Bovary*."

"That was a book," he remarked, "I managed to turn off more deftly than the others."

Every page of the novel was passed in review by Bouilhet during those three years, and subjected to his searching criticisms. The book was boiled down, nothing essential left out, and it became the *chef d'œuvre* known to all. It appeared in the *Revue de Paris* in six numbers between the 1st October and the 15th December, 1856. That which I am about to relate of what occurred at the time is very ancient history—most fortunately.

As soon as the first chapters were out the subscribers rebelled, and there was a cry raised of immorality and impropriety. We received letters of doubtful courtesy. In them we were accused of having calumniated our country, of having debased it in the eyes of the foreigner.



"What!" they cried, "there are women like that!—women who deceive their husbands, who have debts, make assignations in gardens, and go to public-houses! It is impossible! In France—in our beautiful France! In the provinces where morals are so pure! Is it to injure the Government that such things are printed? If so, no doubt, hatred is blind, and injustice leads on to crime."

I could not understand what it all meant. I showed the letters to Flaubert, who said —

"Those people must all be mad."

But the excitement was so great that without being too much disturbed I tried to find an explanation. The conception and the execution of the novel were entirely dissimilar to what readers of a commonplace order had grown accustomed to in their favourite, mild description of literature.

Apart from this general cause there was another more special cause, which was very important, and to the credit of the author.

He had carried the scientific analysis of his characters so far that it resembled rather an anatomical and pathological study. It had the appearance as well as the reality of such a study. In a country like our own, where people of no refinement flatter themselves that they are refined, where the street sweepers demand a religion for the people, where abandoned women speak the language of the prudes, and the word is thought more blameworthy than the act, the bold and powerful descriptions contained in "*Madame Bovary*" appeared not only improper, but indecent. Readers, and they are rare, who knew how to read admired the vigour of the style and the logical way in which the plot was worked out, but readers who did not know how to read, and their number is legion, threw down the book in disgust because one of the characters has some horse dung upon his boots.

At the beginning, when these passions were first aroused, I often engaged in fierce arguments, but

the only reply to all my reasonings and explanations was "Cream of Tartar!" If I called the book a *chef d'œuvre* they replied —

"Naturally you defend your friend; such conduct does you honour."

In the end I would turn my back upon them and stop up my ears.

Flaubert's literary method disconcerted most people, and sometimes even literary people. The method is a very simple one, however. It is by a process of accumulation, with detail added to detail with the most minute delineation, that he obtains his results. It is almost a physical process, and resembles the method adopted by short-sighted people who see objects successively by looking at them very carefully, and then describe them.

All imaginative literature might be divided into two schools, the short-sighted school and the long-sighted school. The short-sighted school sees everything in detail, studies each line, and gives importance to each thing because it sees it apart from its surrounding as it is in itself. The object perceived seems surrounded by a cloud, and to stand out from other objects. Writers of this kind carry about with them a sort of mental magnifying glass which enlarges everything.

Such descriptions as that of Venice seen from the campanile of Saint Mark, and that of the Château de la Misère in "Le Capitaine Fracasse," are admirable results produced by the short-sighted vision, and are from Flaubert's pen. The long-sighted vision, on the other hand, sees only the general effect, while the detail disappears and is absorbed in a harmonious whole.

It takes no account of detail, unless there is some artistic reason for bringing it forward. If a writer of this kind is engaged upon the portrait of a woman he will speak rather of her carriage and bearing than of the shape of her nose or the colour of her eyes; if he describes a town, viewed from an eminence, he indicates at once its special character-

istics. He does not write long accounts of the personages in his story, a word is enough.

The typical story produced by this school of thought is "Colomba," by Mérimée. I may add that the members of the near-sighted fraternity prefer to describe the sensuous emotions, and the long-sighted are given rather to the analysis of sentiment. If a writer were suddenly, after being long-sighted, to become near-sighted, the whole treatment of his subjects would instantly be changed.

Théophile Gautier was in the habit of naming what I call the long-sighted the fleshless school. He told Mérimée, "Your characters have no muscles." Mérimée replied, "Yours have no drapery."

"Madame Bovary" is a novel of extraordinary power, of such intense reality that the term realistic was applied to it. The style of writing was new then, at least under that form, and with such strength and intensity of expression. Consequently it startled people, and they were scandalized by what they thought improper.

Flaubert had interposed a magnifying glass between the spectator and the picture. The spectator looked through it and imagined that he could see monsters, when in reality he saw only human beings like himself. A drop of water seen under a microscope by gaslight is an ocean in which swim formidable-looking creatures. But in reality it is only a drop of water inhabited by infusoria. Flaubert's genius had created the illusion, but the foolish public could not perceive that. It went even farther, and denounced the *Revue de Paris* as an enemy to religion and morality.

Early in November one of my friends, who was in a position to know what was going on in "high authoritative circles," as they are called, came to inform me that we should be placed under the ban of the Police Correctionnelle. I gave a start of surprise, but I was furnished with such full details,

that I could not doubt the truth of his assertion. The *Revue de Paris* was under close surveillance. Although provided with a license, it never introduced politics into its pages, but some former professors of colleges and a few former Ministers of the Second Republic collaborated. That had induced the authors of the Decree of the 17th February to aim some of its clauses at the paper.

We had already been cautioned several times, and censure might mean suppression. "Because of an insult to public morals" would be a shameful epitaph to inscribe on the tomb of a literary journal. And we had no desire to court the disgrace. It was one thing to die a violent death, another to be supposed to have perished miserably on the pallet-bed of a reformatory. The only way was to be prepared for such an attack, and to deprive it, if possible, of its *raison d'être*. All we could do was to read over carefully with the author those chapters of the book which still remained to be published, and to suppress any passage which might be dangerous, or, at least, bear the semblance of danger.

When we had decided what to suppress I went to see Flaubert, in the conviction that he would understand the motive of our unusual strictness, and that he would help us to divert the peril which threatened us. I found him inflexible, yet he was thoroughly kind; indeed, with an indulgent and resourceful kindness. But what he called "Art" was ever in his sight a jealous deity who had a right to exact every form of sacrifice from her worshippers. All his life he was a literary mystic ready to suffer martyrdom on behalf of the goddess he adored. As he would never have made the smallest concession to a persecutor he could not understand that another should seek to escape from persecution. It would be unfair to judge his attitude, which was on this occasion immovable, from any other point of view.

In an artist the principle he acted upon was an

honourable one. To help those he loved he would not have hesitated had the effort meant his own ruin, and he had proved that, but rather than change a sentence long pondered over and definitively accepted, he would have broken with his dearest friend. To all my arguments he only replied —

“I laugh them to scorn. If the *bourgeois* are exasperated by my novel, I laugh them to scorn. If we are put under the Police Correctionnelle, I laugh at that too. You need not have accepted my “*Bovary* ;” you did accept it, so much the worse for you. You must publish it as it is or not at all.”

I tried to insist at great length and with many digressions, although I did not interrupt him. Once he returned to his favourite theory that the artist is superior to the man.

In his eyes theft and murder were trifles compared with the crime of altering a word in a sentence in obedience to ignorant scruples when once it had been approved by the judgment and taste of the writer. That crime he had resolved not to commit. A saying of Charles Lambert’s came to my mind while I listened to him: “Love thy neighbour as thyself means love thy neighbour as he desires to be loved.” I went to see Madame Flaubert, thinking the mother would be less unreasonable than the son, and might help me.

She was hard and unsympathizing, and had returned to the foolish notion she had adopted at the time we first read the “*Tentation de Saint Antoine*.” Without saying it in so many words she gave me to understand that we wished deliberately to destroy the literary value of a work which threw our own productions into the shade. In presence of the illusions and the injustice of a mother one has no choice but to be silent, and I was silent. I had another interview with Flaubert, not to argue with him again, but to tell him the decision we of the *Revue de Paris* had come to. “We,” I said, “maintain our right of suppression, and you adhere

to your refusal. There is only one way of putting an end to the discussion, which interests the public about as much as an empty cockle shell. You must write a short statement, in which you will say that you no longer accept the responsibility of your 'mutilated' work, and that you ask your readers to understand that it is not complete, but in a fragmentary state. Your readers will not read the statement, nor will they perceive the omissions, but your honour will be vindicated and we shall be out of danger."

Flaubert asked for twenty-four hours to reflect; "he wanted to take advice," he said. The next day he sent me the statement, which was printed intact. He was furious and unsparing in his abuse. We continued as good friends as before, however. We were so closely united that nothing could part us.

At the same time it should not be forgotten that we were living in 1856, and that the periodical press existed, or rather expired, under despotic rule, and that the Government had only to close its hand and strangle us at the end of a decree. What would Flaubert have said could he have watched the publication of his posthumous novel! The *Nouvelle Revue*, which printed "Bouvard et Pecuchet," is a periodical favoured by Government, and under its wing he could easily have found protection. The year 1881 bore no resemblance to the year 1856; the decree of the 17th February, however, repassed the Styx it should never have crossed. Now thought is left free. No one now reads a novel under a magnifying-glass to try and detect some microscopic peccadillo in its pages. And yet "Bouvard et Pecuchet" was not printed without omissions. Lines of dots replace whole pages of the story, and, as in "Madame Bovary," it was thought judicious to cut out a good deal of matter, although the *vindictive publique* (the vindictive public) is as sound asleep to-day as twenty-five years ago it was wide awake. Surely, wherever he may be now, poor

Gustave must have trembled with anger and still accused the century of being imbued with a hatred of literature. Calm had been restored, however, and we were no longer in fear of judicial persecution or administrative severity when an act of imprudence again gave colour to the accusations brought against the *Revue*.

Flaubert, with the unthinking impetuosity so common in nervous people, had looked through all the numbers of the *Revue de Paris*, and had made a collection of the dangerous passages and risky incidents. This little collection he gave over to a journalist, whose acquaintance he had recently made. The journalist wrote an article with quotations from the extracted passages, paid me the compliment of printing a sentence of mine in capitals, and inquired how writers who were so unguarded themselves could become suddenly so chaste in a matter which concerned another. The article was noticed. It was a proof that we spent our time in attacks upon morality, and the authorities understood that it was time to have done with such disturbers of the public morality.

The article in question was taken to the Tuileries—I could name the individual who carried it there—sent to the Minister of the Interior, from him to the Minister of Justice, and finally to the Procureur Général (Attorney-General).

Every word of Flaubert's novel was carefully scanned, sometimes in good faith and sometimes in bad; all kinds of offences which would subject it to the action of the law were discovered.

An indictment was brought by the Police Correctionnelle against Gustave Flaubert, Laurent-Pichat, and the printer, A. Pillet. The terms it was couched in were as follows:—"For outraging public and religious morality and good conduct, offences designated in Articles 1 and 2 of the law of 17th May, 1819, and Articles 59 and 60 of the Penal Code."

On the 31st January, 1857, Gustave Flaubert,

the author of "Madame Bovary," the son of Dr. Flaubert, one of the great surgeons of our time, sat in the Sixth Chamber on the bench usually set apart for thieves, cheats, rowdies, and disreputable women. As I was not named in the indictment I was among the audience. The comedy was quite a success. To a court accustomed to judge only vulgar criminals a purely literary trial in which Maitre Senard would address the Court on behalf of his old friend's son was a dainty dish.

The President of the Court, M. Dubarle, was a clever man of literary tastes, favourable to such respectable people as appeared before him, and often scarcely able to repress his smiles when the advocate made some rather transparent allusion. The Imperial Advocate charged to fulminate against the culprits in the name of outraged society was a young man. We had heard him spoken of in terms of praise, and his eloquence was admired. Some lovers of the art of speaking had come to hear him, and I, too, expected an intellectual treat. But if what I heard is judicial eloquence, then I do not think much of judicial eloquence. I admit that the cause he had undertaken was a bad one, but his opening speech as public prosecutor was still worse.

The logic was faulty, and there was nothing on which to hang the argument, but the speech for the prosecution was remarkable for another reason, it attacked passages in the book which the indictment had spared.

Flaubert was cruel. He had the speech reported by a shorthand writer, and afterwards printed and published. We were nearly all literary men in that Sixth Chamber, and many a glance was exchanged between us.

The Imperial Advocate endeavoured to convict the author of "Madame Bovary," but he confounded Apollinarius with Apollonius of Tyanus. He deemed that Madame Bovary's style of beauty was calculated to stir the senses, and he regretted that when she took the Sacrament there was nothing



of the repentant Magdalen about her, in short, that she was no saint. But he allowed that M. Pillet, the printer, was "an honourable man, against whom he could say nothing."

When Laurent-Pichat and Flaubert heard that they could not restrain their laughter; even the President was amused, and no one in the Pretorium any longer believed that a man who had had a hand in writing and in publishing "*Madame Bovary*" necessarily ceased to be honourable.

Maitre Lenard then opened the defence. The speech for the prosecution was analysed and torn to shreds. Soon not a vestige of it remained. He might have quoted M. Guizot's saying —

"The longer I live, the more am I convinced that when imagination tries to reproduce either the scenes of external nature or the passions and emotions of the soul, it falls far behind the reality."

The defence might have been summed up in those words.

The President's decision was deferred for a week. When the Court reopened on the 7th of February the President read a long-winded judgment which was not without pretensions to æstheticism, and laid down the doctrine that "such a system applied to literary production as well as to works of art must result in a form of realism which would mean the negation of the good and the beautiful."

As if any theory of art could be judged by the law, as if Themis were Apollo, and led the dance of the Muses!

This judgment, which has often provoked a smile, was full of the best intentions from a literary point of view, but it could not have been satisfactory in the eyes of the Government, inasmuch as it pronounced that, "Seeing it was not clearly proved that Laurent-Pichat, Gustave Flaubert, and Pillet were guilty of the offences imputed to them, the Tribunal acquits them and dismisses them without costs."

The *Revue de Paris* had won a victory, Flaubert's triumph.

The result of the trial was not such as the authorities had desired. Thanks to this prosecution, to the suit brought by the Police Correctionnelle, and to the speech of the Imperial Advocate, "*Madame Bovary*" had a prodigious success. In one day Flaubert had become famous. All the world wanted to buy the novel which defied morality and outraged things sacred.

People hoped to find a number of sensual scenes and voluptuous descriptions such as had offended the propriety of the Minister of State. But the lovers of forbidden fruit had their trouble for nothing. There was much more satisfaction of this kind to be had from Balzac, Mérimée, Sainte Beuve, Théophile Gautier, and even from the President de Montesquieu. What they did find was fine style, a plot conceived in a powerful if simple manner, and a strength of analysis to which they were not accustomed. A success at first due to stimulated curiosity, became a literary success, and one of the greatest which I have witnessed. The professional critics, who are never in accord, could not damage it. Some admired, some found fault, some hissed, others applauded. Flaubert's name was bandied about like a shuttlecock. The more bitter among the critics alluded to Apuleius's golden ass, and the others were content to indulge in some rambling æsthetic lucubrations with respect to works of the imagination which bore a resemblance to the judgment pronounced by the Sixth Chamber.

Flaubert's name was unknown on the eve of one day, and on the next he found himself proclaimed head of the realistic school of literature. The word "realist" offended him, and personally he never accepted it.

He thought then, and until the end of his life, that the expression "realistic" was applied to the conception of his work, whereas it referred especially to his method—to what I have called the short-

sighted, minute method. Gustave did not agree with this view, and one evening when we were discussing the subject, one to which he constantly returned, he said —

“Send me your ‘Polybius.’”

“What for?”

“To study the War of the Mercenaries. They accuse me of realism, that means to say of copying what I see before me and of being incapable of invention. Very well, I mean to tell them a story no one knows anything about. The scene will be laid near that ‘voluptuous Bay of Carthage,’ as one of their advocates would have called it, and as we are quite ignorant of what Carthaginian civilization really was, I shall not be reproached for my realism.”

With that introduction he began to explain to me the plot of “Salambô,” although he had not yet found the title.

He was under a misconception, for “Salambô” is quite as realistic as “Madame Bovary.” But it cost him a greater amount of labour because he had seen “Madame Bovary’s” surroundings, and he was forced to imagine the scenes in “Salambô.” He went to Tunis to study African scenery; how far he succeeded I need not say here. The subject had taken possession of him, and he spoke of little else.

“There, at least,” he would say to me, “I shall be free, have elbow-room, and not be constantly bound to the earth by an unsavoury tale. Then I shall not have that usher of a Bouilhet always about me pruning my sentences and robbing me of my epithets. The tradition is so widespread and the period so remote that I shall be able to say what I like without being overwhelmed with criticism.” He added, making use of a favourite expression of his, “At last, I shall be able to gueuler (howl) at my ease.”

“Salambô” is certainly the one of all the books Flaubert wrote which is the most excessive in style. I am aware that it produced less impression than

“*Madame Bovary*,” and was less popular, but it was the book which best suited his genius and in which he abandoned himself the most fully to its inspiration. It is the book by which he should be judged, because all the faults as well as the merits of his style are in it. The subject of this novel “*Salambô*” troubled him much at this time, and I find proof of it in a letter he wrote to Louis de Cormenin :—

“I do not know if it is to you, dear friend, or to Pagnerre that I owe a splendid number of the *Loiret*, which is adorned by an article upon your humble servant.

“Most certainly it is the one I prefer, and, frankly, I think it very fine, because it sings my praises. The book is carefully analysed throughout, and, it would be more accurate to say, appreciated. It has given me pleasure, and I thank you heartily. Why do you not take up something of the kind yourself?

“Why do you use your talents only on behalf of your friends? When are we to have a book? As for me, the book I am preparing to write is neither far advanced nor even begun. I am full of doubt and fear. Unlike most great leaders, notably M. de Turenne, I grow more timid with age. An ink-bottle seems to many to contain only a few drops of a black fluid. In the sight of others it is an ocean, and as for me, I could drown myself in it; my head swims when I see manuscript paper, and sometimes the bundle of mended pens upon my table reminds me of a bush full of dangerous thorns. I have already bled freely from those brambles.

“Dear friend, adieu; love to Maxime and a hearty hand-shake to you.”

This was written on the 14th May, 1857. On the 9th of the month Louis had printed an article in the *Journal du Loiret*, which proves his penetration, for he says in it :—

“‘*Madame Bovary*’ will live. After reading it one feels that Balzac has left a successor. Remember

the author's name, Gustave Flaubert; it is a name which will not be forgotten."

While "Madame Bovary" was being tried and judged by the Police Correctionnelle, the *Revue de Paris* had been guilty of more than one imprudence.

The lists of the toasts to which Frederick William, King of Prussia, had drunk had been published, and we had permitted it to be said by a Prussian refugee that to drink well and to govern well were two different things.

The Prussian Ambassador was displeased; he expostulated with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and requested the suppression of the *Revue de Paris*.

The Minister would not have objected, but the Emperor did not consider that Prussia had a right to exact the suppression of the journal, and we only received an order borne by a Commissary of Police, arrayed in his scarf, to suspend the publication for one month.

I resolved to give myself a rest during the enforced holidays we owed to the favour of the Prussian monarchy and of the French Empire. We had fine, dry weather during the month of February. The east wind which had begun to blow with the new moon seemed likely to continue. So, humming the skater's air out of the "Prophète," I jumped into a railway carriage and went off to Holland.

I shall be told my way of resting myself was a strange one. It cannot be a rest to travel on canals and in barges, to cross the Zuyder-Zee on the ice, and be jolted on wheels over the sands of Frisia and Ober-Yssel. On the contrary, it was the best rest possible, for I never knew a word of Dutch, and only in a country where one knows nothing of the language can one find perfect rest and calm. I am disposed to add perfect freedom.

When words are only meaningless, sounds and gestures express nothing to the mind except mechanical reflex action. One's thoughts are not disturbed by a chance word, and one lives alone in the

midst of a crowd. The sense of isolation is ever present in picture galleries and on board steamers, in railway carriages, at table d'hôte, and out walking, and nothing is more soothing. The impressions one receives are the more vivid for not being communicated, and therefore it is needless to communicate them. That journey to Holland has remained a pleasant memory. I had magnificent weather; for nearly a month I did not see a cloud. The tracings of the early frost upon the meadows charmed me, the pictures in the museums told me their story, the church bells rang a joyous peal for me, the beds were not too short, and the food was plentiful. I spent my days in sight-seeing, and in the evening I sat by the stove and wrote out my notes, and complained of deafness to save myself from being compelled to answer the people who addressed me in French. When I returned to Paris, after having spent a month in silence, but in physical and mental activity, I felt that I had benefited by the change.

We settled down to the daily task, and life was passing rather after a grey and neutral fashion, without pleasure and without pain. Each of us was at work, Flaubert engaged upon "*Salambô*," Bouilhet writing a new play in verse, "*l'Oncle Million*," and Gautier had at length decided to begin "*Le Capitaine Fracasse*," which was not carried out at all as it had originally been planned. At first the name was only a title given by Gautier to a publisher to put on the cover of a book, and the story was conceived in an entirely different manner. The name "*Capitaine Fracasse*" was really an anomaly. The romance Gautier had imagined, and often spoke to me of, was borrowed from the fable of the ass clothed in the lion's skin.

"*Le Capitaine Fracasse*" was to be a sort of Miles Gloriosus, a chattering and braggart Gascon, who flourishes a sword, curses the Devil, and abuses Providence, yet is in reality a white-livered coward, ready to replace his weapon in the scabbard as soon as others do the same. Gautier had imagined

something in the style of the "Roman Comique," with a similarly brilliant form and a similar wealth of illustration. It was a novel by Eugène Sue, with a title I have forgotten, and with a hero who went by the name of Victor Hercule Hardi, and plays the same part Gautier had reserved for Capitaine Fracasse, which made him abandon his first idea. When he wrote the first chapter he was not very clear as to what should follow. The pages began to accumulate slowly; the development of the plot was somewhat accidental, but had about it that spontaneous freshness and initiative which characterized all his work. He brought us the manuscript piecemeal as he produced it, for his new novel was to have been printed in the *Revue de Paris*, but as that journal was suppressed before Capitaine Fracasse had completed his adventures, it was not able to publish the story. It had not been possible to destroy the *Revue de Paris* by means of a prosecution for an offence against morality; it was to be sentenced to death as the accomplice of assassins or something little short of it. Ave Cæsar!

On Thursday, the 14th January, 1858, the Opera was giving a grand performance on behalf of a charity. At the Théâtre Impérial, formerly Franco's, a fairy piece had been put upon the stage for the first time. The piece was called "Tur-lututu," and I in company with several others was present in an open box on the first tier. Facing me in a closed box was the Comte de Morny. He wore a sable pelisse on account of the cold of the theatre, and looked rather unhappy.

The piece was running its course amid the usual puns, topical jokes, comic verses, mechanical stage effects, and transformation scenes, when during the second act I saw a man suddenly open the door of the Count de Morny's box and exchange a few hurried words with him. Morny rose at once, cast a glance round the theatre as if looking for someone, and disappeared.

Between the acts I spoke to Amédée Berger, who at the time of his death was president of the Court of Exchequer, and I asked him —

“Do you know why Morny was sent for?”

“There has been an attempt,” he replied, “to kill the Emperor with an infernal machine.”

The news spread rapidly among the audience. People gathered together in groups, full of horror and indignation. By degrees the details became known. But who the assassins were no one could say. Names which it is wiser not to repeat here, and on which no suspicion should have fallen, were pronounced in the most confident manner.

Someone said —

“What will the Government do?”

“Suppress the newspaper,” I replied.

No one took up my words, but Amédée Berger slightly raised his eyebrows with a gesture which seemed to mean, “You are right.”

It will be remembered how great was the excitement in Paris. This cowardly wholesale crime was perpetrated by men who, so long as they saved their own life, were willing to sacrifice that of others. They had slain, wounded, and injured the passers-by, but the Emperor had escaped.

It was a repetition of Fieschi's attempt, only better planned and with more ruthless details. It was known that the assassins were Italians, and the *Moniteur Universel* could exclaim with truth, “No French hand was engaged in this plot.” If no French hand had been guilty, then surely no French journal need be apprehensive. We reasoned thus, and our reasoning was too logical not to be absurd.

On Tuesday, the 19th January, I had spent part of the day in the Rue Chanoinesse, working with the microscope. I arrived rather late at the office of the *Revue de Paris*. There I learnt that a Commissary of Police from the Délégations Judiciaires had served us with an Imperial Decree which declared the *Revue de Paris* suppressed



then and henceforth. Without any more words the publication was extinct. No doubt the difficulty of governing should excuse much, especially in exceptional times, and when those who have charge of the political machine are men of inferior capacity, thoroughly bewildered and without resources, who cannot understand that arbitrary acts will not avert the danger. Billault was then Minister of the Interior. In 1848 he had voted with Greppo in favour of the right to labour. No doubt he imagined that the suppression of the *Revue de Paris* was only a political act, but in reality it was an iniquitous action. The report which preceded the Decree was a flagrant piece of dishonesty. It brings charges against fragments of history, short stories and novels in which it would be impossible to find a trace of controversy or political allusion.

I will only quote two instances. The Decree attacks "Le Coup de Jarnac," by Michelet; an account of a duel borrowed from a volume of the history of France which was about to appear. In Billault's eyes "Le Coup de Jarnac" must needs be an allusion to the *coup d'état* of the 2nd December. No doubt a story of mine called "l'Ame du bourreau," and written to explain the theory of the transmigration of souls, with Nero for its leading character, was mistaken for a psychological analysis of Napoleon I. or Napoleon III.

If fierce hatreds were aroused during the Second Empire, surely the men who served it so badly were somewhat to blame? To possess supreme authority, to be responsible to none, and to be able to destroy an enemy with a word, those are dangerous and tempting powers in the hands of mediocre men, and the Ministers of that day availed themselves of their opportunities. I owed them a grudge for it, I admit, but my grudge disappeared when the Marquis de Chasseloup-Laubat took the head of affairs in 1869, and gave France that liberty I had ever aspired to in theory, but which she had not known for many a day.

The little band of fellow-workers upon the *Revue de Paris* parted company.

Some of them adopted a political career, and have made their mark; the others took refuge more determinedly than ever in literature, which attracted and retained their interest. We had had to leave our baggage in the hands of the enemy; our defeat was no worse than that. An old proverb says, "Plaie d'argent n'est point mortelle" ("A wound to the purse is not mortal").

At thirty-six one is too young to despair, and I found myself back again in my solitude, fit for work, and but slightly depressed. I was then living at the Rue du Rocher, in a small house my friends were kind enough to call an "hôtel." \* I had rose bushes, jessamine, and lilac in my little garden. The ants and the sparrows were on good terms with me. In the day time I had my microscope, at night my telescope, a good library, plenty of ink, and Louis de Cormenin, Flaubert, Gautier, Bouilhet, Lambert, and Enfantin for company. There was no occasion to pity me.

But towards spring I began to long, like the swallows, for flight; the song of the boatmen of the Nile seemed to murmur in my ears. When the south wind blew I would raise my head and inhale the air as if to scent the odour of the boundless desert and of the river sands.

I spent whole days bending over Caillaud's maps. I ascended the river in thought to beyond Khar-toum, embarked upon the Blue Nile, and landed upon the peninsula of Méroé. I had to struggle with the desire which made me long for the shores of the river Astaboras. I wanted to traverse the Abyssinian frontier, to visit the Gouder and Choa regions, fall in with the Christians of Saint John, and to look upon the face of that terrible King Theodore, who was beginning to be talked about. I felt the need of a return to savage life, and I

\* Correctly speaking, a private dwelling such as English house-agents would call a mansion.—TRANS.

longed to sleep once more under the stars. It was with an effort that I abandoned these plans. I gave them up, however, because it would have meant a considerable waste of time at an age when the hours have already to be jealously counted. *Eheu, fugaces labuntur anni!*" But by way of compensation for what I considered a sacrifice, I climbed the Simplon, descended into Italy, and went to Venice, where I established myself upon the Schiavone fronting the lagoon, and with the verdure of the Lido for a background.

The Austrians were there still. On *fête* days, unless some agile Malamocco mariner had braved the sentinels and first hoisted the Italian flag, the yellow and black ensign floated from the masts of Saint Mark. The town was sad, but the life was pleasant. Nothing was changed. I found exactly what I had seen fourteen years before, when I had arrived there one morning, at sunrise, on my return from Constantinople.

The "Glory of Venice" and the "Rape of Europa," by Paul Veronese, Palma Vecchio's and Titian's pictures charmed me as much as formerly, and I still thought that John Bellini's "Madonna" was a *chef-d'œuvre*. The Tiepolos interested me greatly. I studied all those the city possesses, including the Christ bearing the Cross, which is at Saint Alvise, the Anthony and the Cleopatra at the Labbia Palace. I went by the Brenta to look at the great fresco which represents Henry the Third's entry into Venice, which was painted at the Villa Pisani, and has been retouched too freely. This villa, called La Casa dei Leoni, belonged to the Austrian Government, and had been given to General Gorzkowski, who was one of Radetzki's lieutenants during the siege of Venice. The General had died there, his tomb had been raised in the little garden belonging to the house, and was surrounded by laurel bushes. A peasant showed me over the villa. I said to him —

"What kind of man was General Gorzkowski?"

Word for word he replied thus, "Era galantuomo, ma senza lettere ("He was a worthy man, but an unlettered one.")

I stayed two months in Venice; on my return to France I took a roundabout route, visited Padua, Ferrara, Bologna, Florence, Pisa, Spezzia, Genoa, Turin and crossed the Mont Cenis. Italy, still dismembered, and under the yoke of its small principalities which owed allegiance to Austria, was an interesting study. With an appearance of calm, apathetic as it were, asleep under her umbrellapines, she concealed the thrills of excitement that were passing through her whole being.

It seemed as if she had abandoned politics and was only interested in art. The greatest enthusiasm was felt for music, and Verdi had been adopted and received with acclamation on all occasions. One read "Evviva Verdi!" on the walls, alike on those of towns subject to the King of Naples, to the Pope, to the Grand Dukes, and to Austria. Through the Maestro's popularity a kind of general understanding was established. "Evviva Verde" was a sort of pass-word, which could be read thus, "Evviva Vittorio Emanuele Re d'Italia." Secret societies were permanent institutions. Piedmont was a place of refuge for the conspirators, and, as in the days of Charles II., Ruy Blas might have said —

*"La Savoie et son duc sont pleins de précipices."*

One evening at Florence I was walking with a Florentine officer, in the Piazza della Signoria. The night was fine, and the largest comet I have ever seen flamed like a sheaf of gold among the stars. We had stopped in front of the Loggia dei Lauzi, and I was looking at the groups of sculpture, at the "Rape of the Sabines," by John of Bologna, at the "Perseus," by Benvenuto Cellini, and at Donatello's "Judith." The "David" of Michael Angelo stood out white and clear against the façade of the Palace.

The officer said to me, "Those are emblems. Like David, we shall overthrow the Philistine giant. In the Perseus can you not recognize Naples, which has just overthrown the dynasty of Ferdinando Bomba? Judith is Venice, holding in her hand the head of Holophernes of Austria. That Roman carrying off his Sabine woman is Italy, which at length has won back her independence, her freedom." Several times he repeated, "Fair freedom, daughter of the gods!" Then he pointed to the comet and said, "Look at the token in the skies! The time approaches, and great changes are at hand."

A year later we were at Palestro, at Magenta, at Solferino, and had begun that work of emancipation, after which Italy might become an ally, but most certainly would be a rival.

It was not understood at the time. The wave of popular emotion did not pause to reason, and I did not reason either. I loved Italy. She has produced the initiators of our race in all the arts, and been the mother of greatness and of poetry. It seemed to me that it was the duty of any man who had ever touched a pen or admired a picture to deliver the land of Dante, of Lionardo, Ariosto, and Michael Angelo.

I cheered with the crowd when the Emperor traversed Paris on his way to take command of the Army. I had my hour of mad joy after Magenta, and I was at Milan when the first detachment of prisoners arrived at Solferino. I had known a man at Genoa and Turin who was to meet with a tragic end.

I allude to Ladislas Téléki, one of the triumvirs Napoleon III. had appointed when he established the Provisional Government of Hungary; he had even sent him an ambassador. Téléki bore a great name, and was a man of uncommon parts and great cleverness, in spite of being too discursive in conversation.

During 1848 and 1849 he had been the avowed

diplomat of the Magyar insurrection, and had formed relations with many important persons, both in France and England. In the month of December, 1860, Ladislas Téléki went to Dresden to follow up an adventure which had no bearing upon politics. To the shame of the Saxon Government, he had him arrested, and instead of simply expelling him from the country should his presence betoken danger, the authorities delivered him over to Austria. All Europe uttered a cry of indignation. But the first public protest came from France, and was written by the pen of Saint-René Taillandier.\*

Saint-René Taillandier demanded, in the name of personal and individual liberty, in the name of the engagements which the House of Hapsburg had entered into with the ancient kingdom of Saint Etienne, that Ladislas Téléki should be restored to that exile which he honoured by his irreproachable demeanour. It is doubtful whether the Emperor of Austria ever heard the French appeal which pleaded for justice.

He presented himself unexpectedly before Téléki, and on condition that he should reside in Hungary and abstain from all further attempts at conspiracy, he offered him his freedom, or, rather, imposed freedom upon him. Compelled to accept a favour he had not solicited, debarred from the labours of his whole life, the work of upholding the written rights of Hungary, libelled by friends and insulted by foes, he asked death to put an end to the moral sufferings he could no longer endure. Téléki shot himself in the heart with a pistol.

Near the body they found seventeen percussion caps which he had used in rehearsing his own tragedy, in order to bring the piece to a successful *dénouement*.

Téléki was a diplomat who followed the traditions of his order, and the most noted member of that improvised triumvirate which had haunted the head-

\* See the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, January 1st, 1861.

quarters of the French Army during the war of 1859, and at Acqui had rallied round them all the deserters from the Austrian Army. His death was a grief to his friends and a loss to his country. Had the Emperor Francis Joseph but listened to the noble words of Saint-René Taillandier, Austro-Hungary would now count one more eminent politician among its statesmen.

## CHAPTER VII.

### WAR TIME.

IN 1860 I climbed my Jacob's ladder. The angel who supported it shook it. I fell, and as I fell from a great height I hurt myself considerably. Dissatisfied with myself, a sure way of being dissatisfied with others, I passed through one of those periods of morbid suffering during which everything is turned to gloom and life seems all bitterness. I bewailed my hard fate, and a letter I received from Louis de Cormenin about this time contains a well-deserved reproof:—

“I have had your last hopeless letter. It cuts me to the quick to see you abandon yourself thus to discouragement and bitterness. You are unjust to yourself, and if you were able to judge your own character and conduct rightly, you would not write thus.”

What he said was quite right, and I was wrong to proclaim my despair, like a dog lost in a wood. But some sorrows are poignant. They reopen old wounds, reveal the uselessness of sacrifice, the vanity of hope, show us the folly of aspiration and teach us that disappointments we had not anticipated are sometimes inevitable. I was passing through such a season of disillusion, and had weakly allowed myself to fall into a torpid state.

We can usually master our passions when they do not exist, but my sufferings were real, and I could not rise above them. They produced a condition of nervous irritability. I became morose,



shut myself up in my loneliness, wrote very little, but read a good deal, and wandered aimlessly through life.

This splenetic mood could not last long. The power of resistance exists in my nature; I accept the challenge, and defeat the enemy within me. A clarion call like the morning reveille awoke me. I shook off the slumbers, haunted by nightmare which had stupefied me, and roused myself to look beyond the Alps.

Garibaldi had just left to attempt the exploit of Marsala with a thousand followers. The thought thrilled me and I longed to join him. Political past or future I had none.

I had associated with members of all the different parties, uninfluenced by my own political opinions, but I had not joined any of them. I was alone and free, and I fancied a prolonged ride in the open air would benefit me; besides it was no common chance to assist in setting free two burning volcanoes long suppressed, no bad action surely to seek to release a people I had seen so cruelly oppressed in 1851. I was attracted also by the idea of the journey through Calabria. Further, the annexation of Nice and Savoy depended upon the connivance of the French Government in the unification of Italy under the dominion of the House of Savoy. I should therefore find myself in accord with the action of French diplomacy.

I was turning over this project in my mind without coming to any definite resolve when I received a visit from a cousin of Stanislas Téléki's. He was about to start for Sicily, and proposed that I should join his staff. I accepted on the following conditions. I was not to receive pay, and so be free to withdraw when I should see fit; during an action I would obey without controversy, but if Garibaldi should march upon Rome I was to have full warning, so as not to run any risk of being in opposition to my country's arms. We shook hands upon it and arranged to meet at Genoa.

I had told no one of my intention. I thought it useless to invite objections I should not heed. Before leaving I spoke to one friend, Théophile Gautier, perhaps the one from whom I was least likely to meet with encouragement.

I met him in the Tuileries Gardens five days before my departure, and we spent two hours together under the shade of the horse-chestnuts. He was suffering from the most terrible moral depression.

All the difficulties of his life seemed to have risen up to oppose him at the same moment, and he was sinking under them. He told me the story of his struggles and his sorrows, about the thorns and hindrances which beset his existence, wounded and hindered him at every step. How, he asked, did his talent, his industry, and his fame profit him? "They give me dramatic *feuilletons* to write because I know how to write them. Well for me I cannot hew wood, otherwise they would make me hew wood. I am a racehorse, and they have set me to draw a load of stones. They have not one poet in their service, not one, and yet it has never occurred to them to ask me to write verses. They imagine I am under an obligation to them, and the hateful task imposed upon me barely preserves me from hunger."

I listened, and the poor poet's complaint grieved me. He added, "If I had only an income of 1,200 francs I would throw up everything; I would lead a student's life, live in the Latin quarter near the Luxembourg, write poetry, produce a volume of sonnets, and never, never set foot in a theatre!"

After that he said —

"Those who follow that madman, Garibaldi, are fortunate."

I replied —

"In five days I go to join him; will you come with me? You shall be the historian of the expedition, and we will share the same trencher."

He shook his head.

"No! I am a beast of burden; the journal has fastened me to its wheel. I must crop the bitter fodder of my *feuilleton*."

Presently he exclaimed —

"Oh! thrice fortunate Max! You go to confront Scylla and Charybdis; you know not how happy you are!"

When we parted, and we had exchanged the last hand-grip, he came back to me with open arms and cried —

"Oh, Max! Embrace you poor Théo!"

I do not think either of us was dry-eyed. A few days later I was at Turin, and I went to see Count Cavour, who had expressed a wish that I should be presented to him.

I had the greatest desire to meet him, for without being a prophet it was easy to perceive that this small man, the minister of a small kingdom, with a limited revenue and a small army, was about to reconstruct a nation. He was like the soul of the Italian people, which conspired with him and understood him at a word.

The interview lasted for several hours, and our conversation did not hang fire. He was a short man, and he wore an ill-fitting coat, which bulged at the chest, and was tight at the shoulders. His keen, questioning glance gleamed behind his gold spectacles, and seemed to correspond to the smiling expression of his full lips. His countenance was extremely intelligent, and his unkempt hair overhung an immense forehead. Irony was the characteristic of his mind, which struck one most, and I should imagine that he regarded the most powerful men, even, as puppets, to whom he could act the part of wire-puller. For the ends of the game, and to serve his purpose, he would use any cards that came to hand; kings, conspirators, journalists, or soldiers of fortune, all were equally welcome. Count Cavour stands out pre-eminent among all the statesmen of the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Someone once remarked to Rossini —

"Beethoven is the greatest of composers."

"Yes!" he replied, "but Mozart is the only composer."

This saying might have been applied to Camille Cavour; he was the only statesman. He did everything with the full concurrence of the nation; to compass his ends he needed no outside authority, his financial budget was invariably accepted without an ordinance from the Piedmontese King, he never had a struggle with Parliament to obtain a vote when further armaments were needed. He was at once his country's herald and standard-bearer, and, therefore, he was invincible. With his fine instinct he seemed to know what was passing in the mind of each of his countrymen. His keen glance penetrated the secrets carefully hidden in the portfolios of every Italian chancery. No man was ever so popular. Victor Emanuel was jealous of him. One day when they had made a triumphal entry together in the same carriage the cries of "Vive Cavour!" drowned those of "Vive le Roi!" When they reached the municipality Victor Emanuel, colouring with vexation, turned to one of his aides-de-camp and said—

"I look like a tenor leading back a soprano who has had a call."

One need only consider what was the state of Italy, after Novara, in 1849, and what she became under the influence of Cavour, to acknowledge the greatness of the results achieved with such feeble resources. His mind was far-reaching and profound. He knew how to annex the Italian states conquered by the revolution, and at the same time how to intervene so as to prevent the spread of revolution. In this manner Piedmontese ambition was gratified, and European susceptibilities respected.

Garibaldi's expedition, furtively encouraged by him and privately subsidized by Victor Emanuel, could only serve his ends. Should Garibaldi fail, be taken prisoner, and shot by the King of Naples,

Cavour would be freed from an agitator who might one day cause him serious embarrassment. On the other hand, should he succeed he would not be able to assume the dictatorship of the Two Sicilies, which would be united naturally under the throne of Savoy, an accession of territory which would indemnify Cavour for the difficulties certain to arise in dealing with such a conqueror. Therefore, Cavour was looking on with satisfaction and corresponding with certain travellers who were wandering through Calabria and the Capitanate. As to what might occur in the Papal States he announced confidently: "We know our duty to the Holy Father too well ever to allow Garibaldi to attack his troops." In point of fact it was not Garibaldi who went to Castel-Fidardo. Men like Cavour leave no heirs and form no school, because it is impossible to teach intelligence, profound insight, and prophetic divination. Gifts such as his cannot be transmitted, and are not to be found in every minister's portfolio. It is not the same thing to be a genius as to imagine oneself a genius. The eight Marshals, who were called the ready money of M. de Turenne, only added to the disaster of the overthrow at Salzbach. So with respect to Cavour, who, though astute, was not wanting in greatness. He had understood that the union of the different families which compose the Latin race was indispensable to the well-being of all. Since Cavour was suddenly snatched away in the midst of his labours many misfortunes have befallen us.

I never think of our disasters, of the mutilation our country has sustained without acknowledging that his death was an irreparable loss to Italy and to France.

On the 13th of August I embarked on board a steamer called *La Provence* at Genoa. We were a company of thirteen, and over the hatchway leading to the first-class cabins a trophy of thirteen guns met the eye. A Roman would have dreaded the omen.

My name was mentioned in a Genoese telegram and printed in the Paris newspapers. A sort of hue and cry was raised by my friends in Paris. Louis de Cormanin rushed off to Italy in the hope of re-joining me or of bringing me back. When he reached Turin I had already left Palermo, traversed Sicily, and was at Messina, listening to the sound of church bells and bugle calls amid the dust and glare of the cannon. The defenders of the citadel did not spare us. Flaubert wrote me: "If you have only five minutes to spare, dear Max, do send me a line to say what has become of you, to say if you are dead, or living, or wounded. I do my best not to think of you, but the thought of you haunts me all the same and returns a hundred times a day. I see you in all manner of cruel positions. You know what a power of conjuring up imaginary pictures I possess. The pictures are not cheerful, and they wring my heart. Of course I do not expect details. I only want to know what has become of you. Do you remember that Italian refugee at Jerusalem who used to call you 'Mon Colonel?'—it must have been a prophecy. Will you never learn to keep quiet, you brute? As for me I am more and more sunk in Carthage ("Salambô"). I work hard, but it will take me a year yet. They will begin the rehearsal of Bouilhet's play ("l'Oncle Million") in the autumn. The first performance is to take place about the middle of November. Good-bye, dear old friend. I embrace you warmly and wish you good luck, good health, and good spirits, and *evviva la libertà!*"

Another of the set, Frédéric Fovard,\* now the sole survivor of the companions of my youth, and my dearest friend, wrote as follows:—"What are you thinking of? Did anyone ever hear of such a piece of folly? What right have you to help on an insurrection, an act of spoliation? What business have you with the affairs of those chestnut sellers?"

\* He died in January, 1890.

You are in nice company; you have nothing to boast of. You remind me of Gil Blas in the troop of Captain Orlando. You would do well to forsake such bad company and to return to us. If the devil has hold of you and you cannot rest, why not visit the Euphrates or the Tigris? Surely that would be wiser than to involve yourself in an enterprise nothing can excuse you for joining. Your uncle is furious."

All the anxiety, anger, and reproaches were only a proof of affection, and I was deeply touched. When Louis de Cormenin wrote: "My friendship is like an open wound; directly you are in danger it bleeds," I felt ready to throw up everything and to hasten to those who were calling me to them. But it was too late to turn back; it would have been difficult, dangerous even to throw up the game just as it was begun. Then let me confess the truth. I saw no harm in the venture. We were fighting for independence, not engaged in making a revolution. I was acting in conformity with the foreign policy of my country, in no man's pay, and not serving under any Government. In fact I was a free lance, following at will and with interest the fortunes of a people whose sufferings had aroused my sympathy. Therefore I did not believe that I had committed an unpardonable offence, and as I was already so far on the way I decided to proceed.

I never regretted this decision, for I was thus a witness to one of the strangest spectacles our age has produced. Was there ever such an enterprise, a rising so spontaneous and universal? I think not. The towns and villages came out to receive us, and the Royal army disappeared as we advanced, like a flight of startled birds. The population rose up to resist the Government of the Bourbons, and the troops mutinied against the incapable generals they suspected of treachery. Sometimes they even killed them. I arrived at Mileto just a quarter-of-an hour too late to prevent the murder of General Briganti. I had ridden so great a distance that my

horse fell lame. From Reggio to Naples we traversed the country sometimes in force, sometimes alone, or in small detachments, but not once did we have to fire a shot, not once did we meet with hostile treatment, or even with protest. The Royal troops retreated in confusion towards Capua and Gaeta.

The Neapolitan National Guard was ready to join our ranks in a body. The walls of that venerable edifice, absolute monarchy, were cracked and riven, its foundations were rotten, and its roof ready to fall in. No sooner was it touched than it crumbled into ruin.\*

I have described this expedition elsewhere,† so I need not enlarge upon it here. I will only say a word with respect to the battle of Volturno (1st October, 1860). It is desirable to correct an error which has a tendency to gain ground, and which has been repeated recently in the "*Lettres de Mérimée à Panizzi*." It has been said that if in the fight, which lasted thirteen hours, the army commanded by Garibaldi had not been reinforced by some Piedmontese regiments the Neapolitan troops would have defeated it.

On the 11th October Mérimée writes to Panizzi, "It would appear, according to a report which I have every reason to believe correct, that Garibaldi, without the intervention of some battalions of Piedmontese regulars, would have been completely beaten." This is absolutely untrue. Not a soldier belonging to the Piedmontese army appeared at Volturno, neither at Maddaloni, nor at Santa Maria di Capua, nor at Saint Angelo, the three points at which fighting took place. Garibaldi's army met the onslaught of the Royalist forces unaided,

\* This was no new state of things. Chateaubriand, the French Ambassador at Rome, wrote April the 16th, 1829, to Count Portalis, temporarily Minister for Foreign Affairs, "It is unhappily only too true that the Government of the Two Sicilies is commonly considered beneath contempt."

† In "*l'Expédition des Deux Siciles*," 1861, 1 vol., in 12., Lévy.



although the latter renewed the attack all along the line three times in the course of the day.

The truth of the matter is that on the following day, 2nd October, half of one of the Neapolitan brigades, having lost its way, had been unable to take part in the battle, and yet was prevented from regaining Capua. Completely at a loss, it entered the great park of Caserta by way of San Leuccio. A general attack was anticipated, and a battalion of Bersaglieri summoned in haste arrived from Naples and fired a few shots, which resulted in the capitulation of the Neapolitan troops. The first Piedmontese intervention occurred on that day and under circumstances such as I have described. On the 1st October I was never off the battle-field, and I was at Caserta on the 2nd. I should be prepared to confirm what I have stated on oath, and I may be believed because I can have no interest in saying anything but the truth.

When Victor Emanuel arrived in the first days of November to take possession of the kingdom of Naples, Garibaldi went to meet him, and exclaimed, "Welcome to the King of Italy." The King replied, "Welcome to my best friend."

That was the culminating moment in the existence of the man who loved to call himself the "solitary of Caprera." From that hour he began to dwindle, to walk in the light of his vanished splendour. His aged yet childlike spirit had lost its glow. He outlived his own greatness. The dead Cid haunted Babieça and still gained battles; Garibaldi lived on, but fell to rise no more upon the heights of Aspromonte. He was a soldier and a man for brilliant exploits, and he imagined himself a politician. Whenever he spoke or wrote he proved that he would have been wise to have kept silence. No man was ever more misjudged. His admirers have made a god of him; those who disparage him call him an old fool. There is exaggeration in either estimate.

His intelligence was ordinary and his understand-

ing limited. It was a commonplace nature with its moments of inspiration. Scialoja, once Minister of Finance, said of him, "He was a man of grand instincts." The saying was a true one.\*

Garibaldi loved his country passionately. He shared her every illusion and would gladly have given her the empire of the world. Patriotism is a virtue so noble that it should make us pardon many a weakness and many a fault. Garibaldi was guilty of one irreparable crime which history will not condone. He lived too long.† Posterity asks that those it has to deal with should know how to depart at the right moment. The kindest stroke of fortune is that which removes a man when he has accomplished his work. Some men take their place in history unchallenged and honoured, simply because they were withdrawn at once from life and from chances of failure.

We hear a great deal nowadays of the austere virtue of Hoche and of Marceau. I am of opinion that had they lived they would have been marshals and princes of the Empire. Who was the most Republican of the generals of the Republic? Surely, it was Bernadotte.

I lived, for the most part, among the officers composing the staff of General Türr. These officers were fearless, gay young Hungarians, who had inherited something of the chivalry of their ancestors; it gave them distinction. There were horsemen and fighters among them to whom inaction was a weariness. Their dream would have been to have crossed the Adriatic with the Garibaldians, and by way of Croatia to have reached the shores of the Danube and even the Glacis of Comoru; there to have sung Rokoczy's march within hearing of the Austrians.

\* One of the four senators who accompanied the Doge of Venice to Versailles (May, 1835) was called Garibaldi.—"Memoires du Marquis de Souches."

† These lines were written at the time of Garibaldi's death at Caprera.

They formed a little group apart from the Italians. The arms of Hungary, stamped with the crown of Saint-Etienne, were displayed upon their képis, and they wore the attila, the hussar jacket, which is the national costume. In the hour of battle they were ever the first in action, singing the songs of Petœfi Sandor. Most of them afterwards returned to the land of the Magyars, but a few who accepted service in the Italian army became generals. They were men full of fire and energy. Their old companion remembers them still.

Among the Italians who had hastened to join the ranks of those who fought for the union of Italy I was attracted by one man on account of his courteous bearing and his eminently French turn of mind. I allude to Luigi Frapolli, who served as a volunteer upon the staff with the rank of Colonel. Garibaldi, for reasons which are unknown to me, seemed indisposed to make use of his ability. He had been a deputy, however, in the Torinese Parliament, was a good administrator, and was skilled in military matters. I imagine that Garibaldi, irritated when Nice was ceded to France, had not pardoned Frapolli his speech when the question was laid before Parliament. He had said, "To you Frenchmen belong all that is France! And to us Italians a united Italy." This conditional approval of a cession of territory which was to be so amply compensated troubled Garibaldi. He would say of Frapolli, "He is only a Frenchman." In reality he was French. Like most of his compatriots, who rebelled either against Austria or against the Grand Dukes, he met with vicissitudes. At one moment of triumphant insurrection he was dictator at Modena. Then fate turned against him; whenever Italy faced her enemies alone she met with reverses, and Frapolli sought a refuge in France, where he lived, and to which he was attached.

When the bell of Fate tolled the knell of our own disasters he came over to us and tried to help. His manners had the charm of a kindly good humour,

and of a native warmth, tempered, as it were, by his long residence in Sweden and Norway, where he had gone to study geology.

He was too much given to change and restlessness. I have heard him say, "When I was in Dalecarlia I used to dream of the Bay of Naples; now that I am on the Chiaja I regret I cannot be beside the fiords or wandering in pine forests."

He had insatiable longings and confused aspirations, neither of which are favourable to happiness. Often of an evening as we wandered about Posilippo, or near the cascades of Caserta, whilst his tall shadow preceded us in the moonlight, has he told me the story of his life. He had occupied himself in turn with commerce, science, literature, and politics, but had not been able to concentrate his energies in continuous and uniform effort. He blamed circumstances and the alternations of Fate, which deprive the most secure of their equilibrium. He could not see that the instability was in himself, and he resembled a man who has an involuntary tremor and imagines that objects round him are moving. I often found him pacing his room with long steps, ready to explain his plans, formed apparently with the object of escaping from himself. Sometimes he was in a gay humour, and sometimes in a sad one without any definite cause. When in Paris he was out of his element, and yet not happy away from it. He had a tendency to mysticism, which inclined him towards Freemasonry, of which he was the Italian Grand Master. At times he would lose himself for a whole day in talk, then suddenly remember that he had made a business appointment which should have been kept hours before. Full of kindness, demonstrative, and serviceable, he was always pressed for time, but never punctual.

He was the type of the man who is always full of projects.

In spite of his intelligence and wide culture he never succeeded in anything.

His course through life was like that of a labyrinth; the paths crossed and recrossed so that he lost himself. Ariana had not given him the guiding thread of the maze, and the poor man turned round upon himself, went backwards, groped along by the walls, and then found himself confronted by some impassable obstacle.

Frapolli was at Versailles during the Commune. M. Thiers charged him to confer with La Cécilia, and to offer him a considerable sum of money if he would consent to abandon one of the gates of Paris, but La Cécilia was immovable.

The defeat of the French arms and the crimes of the Commune seemed to stun Frapolli.

His projects continued to multiply and to grow more and more diffuse. His thought became incoherent and his glance absorbed, as if fixed upon unreal objects. The brain was haunted only by dreams; his melancholy increased; insanity set in rapidly, and, happily, death came to deliver him. When we were together and used to visit the outposts established along the banks of the Vulturno, there were no premonitory symptoms to indicate that so much ability would be lost in the mists of insanity, that this able talker would be locked in the slumber of the soul, which means silence and gloom. At that time it was his greatest pleasure to visit Alexandre Dumas, then living at Naples, and to renew his thought in that of one who was as the very quintessence of the French spirit. I was a constant visitor at the little Chiatamone Palace where Dumas was living very modestly in some poorly furnished rooms, and by no means in the royal splendour, the fools to whom calumny is a necessity, have seen fit to reproach him with. He was then sixty years of age, and never was his air of eternal youth more striking. With his square tall figure and robust appearance, his great head covered with thick, wavy, grey hair, his smiling countenance, his anxiety to please, his broad chest and firm step, he looked like a good-tempered

Hercules. Like other giants who do not care to abuse their strength, he was very gentle. I never saw the slightest sign of impatience in him. A more amiable man in the original meaning of the word, viz., one made to be loved, never existed. Notwithstanding his brilliant intellect and prodigious powers, he possessed depths of naïveté which could not but win over even those least accessible to his influence. He believed in himself certainly, but he believed also in others, and would endeavour to put a favourable construction upon the motives of those who ridiculed him.

No one ever knocked at his door and was repulsed, or appealed to him in vain for money or help. I was greatly attached to Alexandre Dumas, and as my affection was founded upon my admiration for his genius, I never approached him without the outward deference due to exceptional gifts. His vitality was quite remarkable; it seemed as if he could scarcely contain the life and energy ever ready to overflow all bounds. He was like a musical instrument which vibrates continually and responds to the lightest touch.

After ten or eleven hours of conversation—and what conversation it was—he was as fresh as at the beginning of the interview. When Alexandre Dumas was of the company, what I may venture to call subsidiary vibrations seemed communicated from him to others. No one could escape his influence, which was so powerful that it inspired the most apathetic natures. He was so brilliant that everyone seemed to grow brilliant in his presence.

Michelet said of him: "He is an element of Nature, one of her original forces." There is no exaggeration in the comparison. His mental energy burst forth like a volcano in eruption, the lava stream of his mind flowed perpetually. At the sound of his great laugh people gathered together as to a *fête*. In spite of the fire which burnt within him one may scan his works page by page and not

find a single bitter word. He has been charged with some indulgence in intellectual pride; but who should be excused the weakness if not he? I am, however, prepared to affirm that his vanity was of a very harmless kind, compared with that of some Trissotins I might name. The world expects too much, requires that a man shall possess great powers, and yet be unconscious of their existence. Dumas needed only to look around him if he wished to know his own worth.

At the moment Garibaldi had chosen to cross over into Sicily and take possession of Marsala Alexandre Dumas was starting for a cruise upon the Mediterranean. People laughed because he said he intended to discover the Mediterranean. They were wrong to laugh; let me say, with all deference to the tourists who have visited Marseilles, Algiers, Tunis, Alexandria, Beyrouth, Naples, Genoa, and Toulon, that the Mediterranean is still unexplored. When such a man as Alexandre Dumas sails along a coast it is not with the intention of visiting the ports the mail packets touch at. Only those know the river Seine between Paris and the Havre who have descended its course in a boat.

Dumas sailed about in a small schooner called the *Emma*, the crew composed of two sailors and a cabin boy or girl. The vessel was a boat decked in, and when Dumas stood upright in the cabin he struck his head against the beams.

On the coast of Spain, at the first port he put into, he learnt that Garibaldi had fought at Calatafimi, and made himself master of Palermo.

Dumas rounded the Sicilian headland, invoked the winds like Ulysses, was driven by them towards Trinacria, and cast anchor at Melazzo, just as Garibaldi had established himself there after having scattered the Royalist troops. From that hour he became Garibaldi's emissary. He had with him some fifty thousand francs originally intended for the expenses of his trip. This money was spent in buying guns, which he despatched to Messina. He

went to Turin to see Cavour, to Genoa to urge on the work of recruiting, to Naples, where he had an interview with Liborio Romano, the Minister of the Interior, but was expelled the country nevertheless; and to Salerno, where the bells were set ringing in his honour. Everywhere he took the lead, conferred with influential men, and laboured to bring about Italian unity.

After Garibaldi had made his entry into Naples he was assigned the Chiatamonte Palace, and at his own request appointed Director of Fine Arts, a purely gratuitous function, which did not even ensure him the permission he had sought as his one reward. His wish was to continue the excavations at Pompeii, which had been but languidly prosecuted by the fallen Government.

Alexandre Dumas was full of this project. He had embraced it with his accustomed ardour. He showed me the plans spread out upon his table, and we discussed them, for I knew the site.

"You will see," he said, "you will see what we shall discover. With our pickaxes we will throw light upon the whole of antiquity."

He was anxious to write at once to Paris for archæologists, savants, and artists who would help him in his labours, superintend the cutting of trenches, identify and classify the objects found.

Capua, which still held out and seemed likely to hold out, was quite forgotten, and Gaeta, where troops were being massed, and the French fleet, which preserved a sullen if not hostile attitude, and even Lamoignon, who marshalled and equipped his men with unsparing energy. The one absorbing subject which filled his thoughts was Pompeii, the house of Diomedes, the theatre and the quarters of the Roman veterans. "*Hic jacet felicitas*," he repeated, with his good-natured laugh, quoting an inscription engraved on the wall of a house in the buried city.

I had lent him "*Le Voyage de Richard de Saint-Non*," which I had sent to Naples from



Genoa before embarking myself, that it might be in reserve there against my arrival.

Now that we were no longer engaged in delivering a nation from bondage we wished to deliver a ruined city, and we indulged in illusions at will.

Dumas was anxious to write personally to Victor Emanuel to beg him to place a company of sappers under our orders who would carry on the work of excavation. He had counted without his host, that is to say without the Neapolitans, who objected to see a foreigner in a position of authority, even when the post was unremunerative, and asked, had the system of privilege returned?

The natives considered the presence of Alexandre Dumas among the ashes of Pompeii a scandal, and began to murmur, "Fuori Straniero." Alexandre Dumas was unconscious of these facts, but we, his friends, had been warned, and were on our guard.

Among the populace of the Santa Luccia quarter, where all the risings in Naples are brewed, we had some well-wishers, who were not chary of their information provided it was likely to interest us and was sufficiently paid.

Through one of these men, called Gambardella, it became known at the Foresteria Palace, where we had our headquarters, that a demonstration to demand the expulsion of Alexandre Dumas was likely to take place. We were informed of the day and the hour.

I received instructions from General Türr, and at the appointed time I went, accompanied by two superior officers, to Dumas' abode. Castelnuovo, situated in the neighbourhood of the Chiatamonte Palazzo, was guarded by a company of Hungarians, commanded by a Captain who could be depended on.

Night was closing in and Dumas was still at table, surrounded by some of the guests he always had about him. He was in a gay humour, and laughed heartily at the stories he told us. Suddenly a distant murmur came from without, like the sound

of the waves breaking upon the pebbles. It grew louder. Dumas' attention was awakened.

"Is there a demonstration to-night?" he said. "Against whom or what? Have they not got their United Italy?"

The tumult increased so much, with cries of "Away with Dumas! Dumas to the sea!" that the two Colonels and I went out and stationed ourselves at the door of the Palace.

At Castelnuovo the Hungarian company were under arms in the outer court. The guard was doubled, and the Captain, now a General of Brigade, stood with his arms crossed, leaning against the wall.

The procession advanced, preceded by a big drum, by Chinese bells, and the Italian flag. It consisted only of some three hundred brawlers, who were shouting with all their might, without knowing what they were shouting for. There was nothing very formidable in the character of the crowd, which was dispersed after a few words exchanged and a few blows with the butt end of the musket. The sight of the soldiers who took up a position in the street completed its discomfiture.

The whole performance did not last more than five minutes. When I re-entered the Palace I found Dumas seated with his head resting in his hands. I touched him on the shoulder. He looked up, and his eyes were full of tears.

"I was accustomed," he said, "to ingratitude in France; I did not expect to meet with it in Italy."

This speech will provoke a smile now, but I was touched by it. Dumas had a right to expect, perhaps not gratitude, but, at least, a neutral attitude, from the people of Naples. He had spared nothing, neither time nor money nor effort, in its service. It was no great presumption on his part to hope that he would be forgiven by it.

Count ——, one of the Colonels who had accompanied me, remarked —

"They are just the same riff-raff as in the days of Masaniello!"

Dumas shrugged his shoulders, and exclaimed —

“Bah ! the people of Naples are like every other people. To expect gratitude from a nation is like expecting the wolves to be herbivorous. It is we who are simpletons to wear ourselves out for such rubbish as that. It was hardly worth while, though it seems to me to turn upon me for what I have laid out in the cause of Italian unity. I have only expended money and toil in their behalf without thought of my own advantage. There must be something strangely wrong in the character of men who try to get rid of me for such a reason as that.”

The incident, which was really only ridiculous, gave him pain.

The members of our Staff endeavoured to efface the disagreeable impression. A great dinner was arranged in his honour, an excursion planned to Pompeii, permission to hunt in the Capo-di-Monte Park obtained for him, but he continued sad. He spoke of taking another cruise in the *Emma*, to visit Tripoli and the Barbary coast. By-and-bye, the light-heartedness which was one of the secrets of his strength asserted itself, and the mischance seemed forgotten. He still remembered it, however, and six or seven years later, when he met me in Paris, he spoke of it with bitterness.

On November 7th, 1860, King Victor Emanuel made his public entry into Naples. Alexandre Dumas and I stood side by side in a window of the Foresteria Palace. The procession was to pass before our eyes, but the weather was deplorably bad. A gale from the south-west was blowing in heavy gusts, great waves rolled in, ploughed deep furrows upon the sea, and tossed about the vessels at anchor in the Bay, rain fell in torrents, and the crowd walked about under umbrellas.

The most hopeful natures were depressed, and in vain the Neapolitans made the sign against the *jettatura*. The heavens were angry, and did not care to hide it.

Dumas said to me, “Look at that line of soldiers

who guard the course of the procession. Look carefully, you will not see a red shirt among them—not one of the volunteers who fought at Marsala, Calatafini, Palermo, Melazzo, Reggio, Cajazzo, and Volturmo. Less fortunate than Joan of Arc's standard, they bore the heat and burden, and have not worn the honours of the day. There are only Piedmontese here. The *fête* is for them, and they will eat the chestnuts without having burnt their fingers to pick them out of the fire. After all, sovereigns are as ungrateful as their subjects. It is right to do well from an abstract sense of justice, without thought of reward. That is the only way to preserve one's soul in peace, and to avoid disappointment."

Alexandre Dumas has left an ineffaceable impression upon my memory. In spite of a certain amount of disorder in his life, which belonged to the exuberance of his nature, all his ideas were elevated. He has not been justly treated. Because he was extraordinarily witty he was accused of being frivolous; because he could create with the most astonishing facility, he was reproached with being a careless writer; and because he was lavish, he was accused of want of breeding.

These reproaches have always seemed to me contemptible. I grant that he was not wearisome, nor pedantic, nor miserly, and I confess that I cannot find it in my heart to blame him on that account. Dumas was so generous by nature that he could not calculate. He was like a horn of plenty, continually being emptied into outstretched hands. He gave away the half, if not more than the half, of what he earned.

When his purse was empty then he borrowed from others. It is needless to add that he was despoiled; the law courts made known the fact to the whole world.

I went, I recollect, in 1853, to visit the house he had built on the slopes of Marly, and which he had christened Monte Cristo. The garden was small

and the house not remarkable in any way. It was the kind of villa tradesmen of moderate means retire to when they give up business. The rooms were unpretending enough, though of good size on the first and second floors. At the top of the house, quite under the roof, there was a little room with a table in it on which was placed a desk covered with red velvet and spotted with ink. There this indefatigable toiler worked the greater part of the day and sometimes part of the night, whilst, according to good-natured tongues, the rest of the "Palace of Monte Cristo" was abandoned to friends, male and female, to idlers, to the curious, and to parasites. When I saw the unfurnished, deserted house, the uncared-for garden overgrown with weeds, a bitter feeling took possession of me. Alas! the man whose brain could instruct and amuse France, Europe, and, indeed, the whole world, was not able to retain the home he loved, in which he kept for himself only a humble corner with just enough space for his writing-table. I grant that he was imprudent. He never knew how to get 10 per cent. for his money, nor was he on the track of lucrative investments. He did not offer good advice to the unhappy people who turned to him for charity, nor put the friends who gathered round his hospitable table, which never seemed large enough for their numbers, upon short commons. I know it all, and that he deserved to be punished. Still it is a bitter thought that the man who remodelled French dramatic forms and raised the historical novel to a position it had not yet held in literature should have been turned out of his house by bailiffs and their assistants.

He never ceased work; he was like the wandering Jew of the pen. He was always involved, gave away and forestalled the money he expected, and in spite of his prodigious industry was never able to overtake the arrears he incurred on behalf of others rather than on his own account. It has always surprised me that no man with knowledge of busi-

ness ever came forward in those days to undertake Alexandre Dumas' affairs and to set him free to write in his own way. The work might have attracted many an honourable man.

Young men of this generation cannot realize how passionately those of my own loved Dumas. In our childhood we had devoured "l'Histoire du Capitaine Pamphile," which appeared in the *Journal des Enfants*. Then in our youth we had applauded "Antony" and the "Tour de Nesle," which drew crowds for a period of fifteen years. Afterwards came those great dramas "Reine Margot" and "Les Mosquetaires." Wherever we turned, to the pages of a *feuilleton*, to a book, or to the stage, the name of Dumas greeted us. His universal genius embraced everything. "Antony," which one of the experts in dramatic criticism has judged out of date, was perhaps the greatest sensation of its day.

The vigour of his conceptions was part of himself, and due solely to the richness of his own nature, to the abounding life which poured itself out like a river, and swept everything along with it. The psychological phases his hero passes through alone create, sustain, and accentuate the interest of his dramas.

Victor Hugo needs all manner of historical properties, the tomb of Charlemagne, the ghost of Barbarossa, the bier of Lucrezia Borgia; the parlour of an inn where two people in ordinary dress meet is all Alexandre Dumas requires to stir the soul to its depths and fill it with pity and terror. He was a master of his art, and he put new life into the drama, and enabled a whole generation of playwrights to forsake the way-worn paths of melodrama along which tragedy stumbled, weary and old and ready to fall at each step.

His powers of invention partook of the marvellous. A sentence from Brantôme, Estoile, Cardinal de Retz, or Delaporte would furnish him with material, and enable him to reconstruct a whole period of history.

One day the "Mémoires de la Police," by Peuchet, written with too much of Lamoignon's collaboration, fell into his hands. He read the account of a fact which actually took place under the Second Restoration in times when the incident of the Hundred Days had served the Bourbon Government as a pretext for a degree of severity which certainly did not advance its cause.

The anecdote, which is told in three pages, interested Alexandre Dumas. He took it for the subject of "Monte Cristo," a novel in eight volumes. He would raise a whole imaginary fabric, logically conceived and calculated to interest and excite the reader, and to move him deeply, upon the very slightest foundation. Was it because he had a genius for invention that worthy people, incapable of inventing an idea themselves, called him a charlatan? It may be so, for in reality he has been chiefly reproached with being amusing. It is strange that in a country like ours, which prides itself upon its wit and gaiety, a writer should only be able to secure lasting fame when he is not too witty or too entertaining.

Dumas could not be dull, his spirits were inexhaustible. The least learned of his readers have sometimes accused him, upon the strength of unfounded report, with distorting historical facts to give an interest to his novels. I admit that occasionally he sinned against historical tradition, but other writers, historians even, have done as much. When he chose to be so Alexandre Dumas could be more exact than anyone. There is one of the incidents of the French Revolution which has always excited my keenest interest. I refer to the flight to Varennes, that strange expedition undertaken on the shortest night of the year, an expedition madly planned, ill-executed, and which miscarried miserably almost within view of the frontier. It had always seemed to me that the incident was but little known, and should be carefully studied. Besides, I had a kind of personal interest in its

details, for to my great-grandfather had been entrusted the task of providing funds for the journey. I was familiar with the story from my childhood, and I think I can affirm that there is not a single published document relating to this adventure I have not studied, including the letter written by Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette in invisible ink, and sent by them through Champcenetz to Barthélemy, then French Ambassador in London. Among all the books which treat of the flight of Louis XVI. the only accurate one is Alexandre Dumas' "*Voyage à Varennes*." In it historic truth is scrupulously respected. The fugitives are followed stage by stage and step by step, and the method is such that the most earnest of historians might take example by it. Dumas was wrong to introduce personal anecdotes into the narrative, to tell us about his post-chaise and the omelets he ate, but he was expansive always, and it is difficult to change one's nature. In a forest the oak tree covers more space than the fern.

When the history of romanticism shall be written he whom we loved to call Father Dumas, and who was not offended by our familiarity, must be given a high place. He will not be confounded with his many imitators when through the action of time the productions of that literary spring shall have been sorted and arranged in their true order. What the stage was before his appearance will then be rightly understood, and the importance of the dramatic revolution he led will be fully realized. His drama, "*Henry III. et sa Cour*," is the first mile-stone along the path he pioneered. Had he done nothing else he might lay claim on this account to be considered an exceptional genius, a creator. His work, which almost forms a library of itself, was enormous. I have already said that he never wrote a cruel word; I might add that he never wrote a coarse nor an improper word. He said everything exactly as it ought to be said. In this respect the attitude of his mind was irreproachable.



Alexandre Dumas had lived so much among the chronicles, among the sources of French history, he had listened so often to the recital of the exploits and brilliant deeds of our arms under the First Empire that he imagined France must be invincible. When the day of her defeat came he was tottering upon the brink of the grave. Originally his strength was colossal, and only after he had been struck several times by apoplexy did he succumb. He had lost control over his body, but his brain was clear. The thought of the future troubled him. One day he said, "I feel as though I were standing on the summit of a monument, which trembles as if its foundation were in the sand." His son replied, "Be easy, the monument is well constructed, and its foundations are firm." He died during the war, clinging like so many others to illusive hopes, and believing that victory must revisit the French camp it had dwelt in so long. He did not see Paris capitulate, nor the mutilation of France, nor the Commune, for the Gods loved him. The Père Dumas, how far astray he has led me! I met his charming personality by the way, and as was inevitable I followed him.

I have wandered from his little palace of Chiata-mone, in which I often visited him in 1860, as far as Dieppe, where he died. It was not easy to tear oneself away from him. He was like an ever-flaming hearth, which glowed and warmed, while dazzling sparks flew out of it in all directions. I shall never forget the hours we passed together on the Chaija, at Messena, or on the shores of the Bay, where we watched the fishermen's beacon reflected in the water beside the stars. He gave me a last embrace on board the *Océphise* when I embarked for France. Had I gained nothing by the Sicilian expedition save the delight of spending two months in the familiar friendship of Alexandre Dumas I should never regret having taken part in it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE ARTISTS' STUDIOS.

MANY of the men of whom I have spoken in the foregoing pages were not my friends in the strict acceptation of the word; indeed, in the amenities of social life we use the term somewhat too freely. At least, I was frequently in contact with them. There were others, however, whom I met by chance, and passed by in my daily life, who should not be buried in silence. My acquaintance with Lamartine for instance I owe to a man who was but little known in his own time, and is now quite forgotten.

Where, and under what circumstances I fell in with Sarrans *jeune* I cannot now say. Sarrans *jeune* was a little old man, with white hair and a nose flattened down upon his face. An unmistakable accent proclaimed him a native of Toulouse, whenever he opened his enormous mouth. A representative of the people for the department of Aude in the Assemblée Nationale of 1848, his southern tones had often been heard from the tribune. He was besides a very honest man and a pleasant companion. He had spent many years of his life under the Government of July in writing the history of the First Empire—after the *coup d'état* of the 2nd December, his book was left upon his hands, no publisher cared to bring it out, and possibly he was not anxious to publish it himself. Still, he would occasionally take his manuscript under his arm and give a reading in a friend's house.

One evening he came to see me to beg me to go, on a certain evening, to Lamartine's house, where he

was to read a chapter on the Retreat from Moscow. I had never had an opportunity of meeting the "Chantre d'Elvire" (the singer or bard of Elvire) and I accepted the proposal. I had seen Lamartine, at the Foreign Office, where I was often on guard, during the crisis of 1848. I had beheld him at the tribune effacing Ledru-Rollin, who cut a contemptible figure. I admired the poet in him, and thought his prose inferior to his poetry. As a politician I felt that he had been disappointed in his ambition, that he was guided by no fixed principle, and that he tried to conceal his defeat under figures of speech. In short, I realized that he was an unpractical dreamer intoxicated by his own eloquence and ill-fitted to guide the destinies of a great country.

There were traits which prejudiced people against him; he had set on foot a subscription, collected for his own benefit, sent about his autographs, and he wept freely over the hearth of his fathers. His supplicating voice and outstretched hands were objectionable. His poverty, which was only relative, had not been occasioned by the public positions he had held, nor was it the result of devotion to literature. He had simply managed his affairs badly and been unlucky in speculation. He fancied he was possessed of great capacity for business, but his calculations had turned out ill and his fortune had suffered. It was to be regretted that he should have done anything to lessen the interest felt in him and the gratitude due to the man who had fought bravely on the 26th February, the 16th March, the 17th April, and the 15th May, to stem the revolution he had done so much to bring about. Still, if to some extent these circumstances qualified my respect for Lamartine the opportunity of spending an evening in his company was a chance I was glad to welcome, and I kept the appointment punctually.

Lamartine was then inhabiting a small private house in the Rue de la Ville-l'Evêque. There was a courtyard in front of the house, and it opened upon a garden full of old trees, which cast an agree-

able shade. The rooms, I thought, dull and rather scantily furnished. There was an air about them, not of poverty, but of straitened means and of retrenchment, at the cost of comfort. To a man accustomed to every refinement of luxurious living the change must have been a source of suffering.

Lamartine was in a rather shabby black coat; he looked tired, but his constrained manner and a certain air of fallen greatness did not detract from his dignity. A line of Alfred de Musset's occurred to me when I saw him —

“ Le bien a pour tombeau l'ingratitude humaine ! ”

Apollo, grown old and unable to abandon the flocks of Admetus, would have been a fitting comparison. He had the melancholy air of that conception of the god. Lines of care marked his brow, his smile had only a surface amiability, his carriage was slow and majestic, and recalled something of his youthful grace. He had plotted with thunderbolts and the thunderbolts had scorched him. There was something about him, indeed, which suggested a fallen god who still remembers Olympus. Usually he seemed indifferent to conversation, but occasionally some chance word would arrest his attention. Then the rich tones of his voice pouring out harmonious phrases, adorned with imagery and all the resources of his logical mind, recalled his triumphs in the French Chamber, where had he only contended for the prize of eloquence the victory must always have been his. But those were momentary flashes. He would fall back into his former silence, and only rouse himself to answer the person who addressed him, in courteous monosyllables.

The reading began. Lamartine seated himself comfortably in an arm-chair, so comfortably, indeed, that he appeared prepared for repose rather than inclined to listen. Sarrans *jeune* read, with southern fire, some episode, which I have forgotten, of the Russian campaign, that campaign which has been described once and for ever in the brilliant

pages of Ségur's "*Histoire de la Grande Armée.*" I admit that I was not listening. I was looking at Lamartine. His head had fallen back, his mouth was open, his cheeks had fallen in, and his eyes were closed. The sound of a slight snore roused him from sleep; he smiled, and said, "Very good," then in two minutes he had fallen back in his chair. One of his feet rested upon a stool and attracted my attention. On it was a polished leather shoe with a piece of soft calf-skin let in, and the foot, if I may be excused for saying so, was disfigured by a monstrous bunion, which formed a kind of lateral protuberance. When Lamartine, brilliant and charming, was travelling, like a young prince, in the mountains of the Lebanon this foot was slender and arched, and Lady Hester Stanhope had admired it. That had all happened long ago; the aged sorceress of the Saida would not have recognized him to whom the stars she interrogated had promised royal destinies. The stars had veiled their light. The foot "a stream could flow under without wetting" was covered with callosities. The politician had been broken by his fall, the poet had lost his lyre. A poor writer bound to a task so ill remunerated that it would not cover the interest due upon the debts his own extravagance had accumulated was all that remained after such a splendid career.

As for his extravagance that was natural to Lamartine, but with age it changed its character and became morbid or insane prodigality. When his mental powers gave way he retained the recollection of his past grandeur.

Lamartine would enter a shop and buy indiscriminately, without reckoning. Once he purchased sixty clocks, on another occasion three hundred pairs of stockings. A friend would follow him at a distance and give the tradesman a hint that he must not pay attention to his fancies.

He was another instance of a man who did not know when to die. Had he passed away the day

after the one on which he tore the red flag the ancestors of the communists tried to force him to accept, what a memory would he not have left behind him! Fate was unkind and imposed a too protracted old age.

His soul took flight during the last year but one of the Empire; his real death occurred during the political elections of 1849. From that time he was only a shadow.

Among the audience at this reading, which had it not taken place in Lamartine's house I should not now remember, was Lanfrey. He was a fair young man with attentive, obliging manners, always ready to turn a compliment. Under his youthful, gracious bearing it was easy to divine his ambitious views, and natural that he should indulge high hopes, for his mind was clear and incisive, and his power of logical deduction remarkable. He had a contempt for men and did not mind showing it. Nations were a flock of sheep according to him, and the better for being guided with a strong crook. I do not think he would have disliked the task of shepherding them. I believe he called himself a Republican; I should myself have mistaken him for an Absolutist. It seemed to me that his Republic would have been an oligarchy in which he would not have assigned himself the lowest rank.

He wrote to me in a letter, dated the 23rd March, 1855:—"There are no men left in France. The individual has been slain for the good of the multitude, of the masses as our hare-brained legislators express themselves. Then one fine day they discovered that the people had never existed, except in theory, and that the masses were in part a flock of sheep, and in part a band of wolves. It is a sad story. Now we have to lift the human soul in the individual, above the blind and brutal tyranny of the multitude, a noble task, indeed, for which I believe X— adapted by right of his strong sense of the dignity and the self-respect a free man should possess. Let him remember Lord Byron!"

Lanfrey was quite serious in writing thus. He despised the vulgar and servile worship of the multitude, and quoted Shakespeare.

"How well he understood the character of the people!" he exclaimed. "Do you recollect the scene in the forum, where Brutus describes the assassination of the great Cæsar to the populace. One citizen cries, 'Live Brutus! let him be Cæsar!' And the same citizen, when Antony has spoken, calls for—

"Brands to fire the traitors' houses!"

Lanfrey had a lofty spirit, did not judge men on the surface, nor fall down and worship the people's choice until he had made thorough investigation into aims and motives. Some of his sayings are still remembered. He it was who called the *coterie* of the Free-Thinkers the Jesuits of Atheism, and said that the Délégation of Tours was the dictatorship of incapacity. I am of opinion that he shrank from working under orders, and fought best in partisan warfare. Indeed, he was a formidable partisan, who never yielded an inch of ground to his opponent.

Sometimes he was not able to control himself in discussion—arguments overpowered his utterance, words crowded to his lips, a slight natural defect of pronunciation increased, and occasionally he even began to stutter. I fear that his short life, which was filled with work, brought him chiefly disappointment. His vessel was afloat, but he knew not into which port he should direct his course.

Finding himself ignored and misunderstood under each Administration, he sulked with all or even went into opposition. He had begun a "History of Napoleon I." The defects of this many-sided nature were all he was able to perceive, and these he sought to expose. He was encouraged in his work by men who were anxious to prejudice the cause of Napoleon III., and he applied himself to the task very successfully.

The outbreak of the war interrupted the publica-

tion of this book. When peace was forced upon us Lanfrey had become a Deputy, and M. Thiers was in power.

The historian of the "Consulate and the Empire" sent him to Berne as Minister Plenipotentiary. The appointment placed him in a position his high qualities fitted him to hold, and at the same time it took him away from those deliberative councils in which he might have proved himself an embittered opponent. Further, he would be altogether debarred from finishing his book, which was both a refutation of M. Thiers' own and a rival publication. In proverbial phraseology, he killed two birds with one stone.

Henceforth Lanfrey, who was valued as a writer, and had already made his mark, was absorbed into diplomacy, and lived a life irreproachably correct, but unknown to fame. His last years were wasted in honourable but unproductive occupation. A man who abandons literary pursuits and historical research to represent a conquered power in a neutral country, where he serves commercial interests of no great importance, and who voluntarily spends his life in drawing up despatches which can have no influence on general politics, has forsaken the substance for the shadow. I cannot but believe that Lanfrey sometimes regretted the time when he was master of his own thoughts, when, though no one called him "Your Excellency," he was more independent.

Had he lived, I am convinced that he would have returned to the life of letters, but death did not give him the choice. Consumption of the throat attacked him, and brought him to the grave in the midst of his career, and before he had fully shown what metal he was made of. I am of opinion that, had he not forsaken the paths of literature, to which his talents and his inclination should have bound him, he would have risen to eminence.

The general public does not know Lanfrey. He was not popular, and never would have been so.



That is to his credit. Between fame and popularity there is a great gulf fixed. The "D'Arvers" sonnet is celebrated—even now we may pronounce it immortal—but it will not be popular. To please the crowd and be understood by it, a certain degree of vulgarity is absolutely essential. This quality is represented in music by the "Postillon de Longjumeau;" in painting, by the pictures of Horace Vernet; and in literature by Eugène Suë's "Mystères de Paris." Such a quality as this, or, to speak more correctly, such a defect, Lanfrey did not possess. He had the lofty ideas and the cultivated style which charm a refined taste. His was not the reputation given by a *coterie*; it was the well-considered, enviable reputation conferred by men of weight who are fastidious judges of the things of the mind, and know how to appreciate style.

The same may be said of Eugène Fromentin, whose reputation, based upon the general consensus of writers, critics, and persons of taste, need not fear the verdict of the future. He was a man of exceptional gifts, yet never was feeble frame the abode of intellectual power.

His highly nervous organization was like a sensitive plant. He seemed to receive impressions from every quarter, to assimilate them and reproduce them, fresh and life-like, in the conceptions of his fancy.

Fromentin had the rare good fortune to be able to give expression to all his sensations; two tools were ready to his hand, and he could complete with the one that which the other had begun. What the brush failed to express the pen could relate. He had the eye of the painter, the eye which never forgets, retains a memory of a fallen shadow or a ray of light, of a delicate shade of colour, of the reflections in water, the folds of a drapery or the sheen on a texture. At the same time he possessed the critical faculty which compares, judges, and comprehends.

Moreover, he knew how to clothe his thought in

an almost faultless style. The ideal of perfection he applied to his own work never allowed him to rest satisfied. I knew him well, and was often surprised by his self-dissatisfaction, and by the severity with which he criticized his own productions.

No doubt this tendency was increased by the state of his health. He was always weakly, sometimes really ill, in which case his natural self-distrust would increase and appear to float like a mist between him and his work. Objects then seemed to lose their true proportions, and ideas that were in reality bold and clear became weak and colourless to him.

He would be quite discouraged, have a difficulty in setting to work again, and need to rouse himself for effort. I remember seeing him often in the Rue de la Rochefoucauld, at the studio where Gustave Moreau painted his "*Ædipus and the Sphinx*." He was then engaged upon one of his best Algerian pictures, but would become discouraged, paint out his work, throw down his brushes, efface and begin once more only to efface again. Apparently he could not believe in his own merit as an artist.

His work was always conceived with pain, and he was unhappy until he had realized that the *chef-d'œuvre* his dream had conjured up would not take form upon his canvas. Among painters those who have not absolute confidence in their own powers are rare. Fromentin, however, gave way to despair and needed reassuring. He was aware that he had two methods differing the one from the other, if not actually opposed, and that he did not invariably succeed in combining them. I speak, of course, only of his execution; in the composition of his pictures there was the most perfect unity. The secret of this discrepancy, which he carefully hid, was at once apparent to a practised eye. Fromentin painted all the accessories of his pictures, armour, drapery, saddles, etc., from nature; the figures and

the horses were painted from memory ; the technical expression current in the studios for this method is "chic" painting. Thus it happened that whereas the accessories were treated with great vigour the figures, in spite of their grace, often lacked force. In the plastic arts the direct study of nature, the study, so to speak, of the documents which can, however, be modified, must always be preferable to the product of the memory. For however powerful the memory may be it is certain to betray some poverty of detail, some lack of definite outline.

Fromentin was torn asunder on the one hand by the accuracy of nature and on the other by the inaccuracy of his own remembered impressions. The unequal execution apparent in several of his pictures, and of which he was so painfully conscious, is due to this cause. Those of his works which are wholly the result of imagination, such as "*Centaures et Centaureses*," or which, like "*Les Vues de Venise*," are painted entirely from nature, are, however, remarkably fine.

Eugène Fromentin's career was fixed unalterably, in consequence of his early successes, in one grove. Algeria had absorbed him, and there was to be no escape from it. He was a fixture there in spite of his efforts to turn aside, and there he remained.

To gather other impressions he went to Egypt, which I do not think he understood ; perhaps he was not there long enough. Then he worked in Venice, but without result. No one recognized his hand when he was not painting Algerian scenes. He had so accustomed the public to the burnous and the haik that it would not accept the scarf of the gondolier or the blue robe of the fellah, and only took them for a disguise. Picture buyers and picture dealers vied with one another in driving him back to the Tel and the Sahara, he would gladly have fled from. To all his proposals they replied, "No, give us one of your little Algerian bits, you know, with one of those pearly little horses you paint so admirably." He railed at

them, but set to work nevertheless, for the hundredth time, to paint his little white horse, his little Arab with the bare arms, the little blue sky, the little silvery ford, and the little tree unknown to any botanist. On a day when he had just finished one of these pretty scenes he showed it me with a shrug of the shoulders. "That is what I am condemned to for ever!" He had resolved to break definitely with this enforced tradition which had closed him in. He went to Holland to study its school of painting, and also to look upon its endless pastures and abundant vegetation, so as to shake off the memory of the desert, of the barren rock, and of the palm-tree. I am disposed to think that this excursion through green fields and under misty skies might have transformed his style, but death came before he could reveal his talent in new surroundings. He will only be known as the painter of Algiers. The impression the country had produced upon him was so powerful that it never seemed exhausted or even diminished. Its influence was stronger than all subsequent observation, than his other interests and other travels. To him Algeria was a vast album; he only turned its pages and found within them the charming scenes which were to take form upon his canvas, and by which he is known and remembered.

I imagine that he was very sensitive to criticism. His rather morbid nature was surely more susceptible to blame than his pride would allow him to acknowledge. He was ever ready to find fault with his own work, but he did not care to be found fault with by others. Two letters I find among those he wrote me are a proof of this. In a review of the salon I wrote for the *Revue des Deux Mondes* I thought fit to qualify my praise of one of his pictures rather freely. In his letter on this occasion he says, "Your remarks are quite fair, and had I to speak of my own work I would put my signature to them all. I thank you, my dear

friend, for all you say in your article, for its truth and sympathy, for its genuine regard and appreciation." The next year my article was entirely eulogistic.

He thanked me for it in ambiguous terms, which were not, however, hard to interpret. It was clear that my former strictures had displeased him. "Your article gives me reason to think that you like my interpretation. After other criticism which has crushed me I cannot but be grateful for such a proof of appreciation from a friend."

One day we were talking about art criticism, and I referred to the difficulty a conscientious writer must experience in speaking the truth on account of the susceptibility of artists, a susceptibility he would willingly spare.

He remarked, "If the judgment pronounced upon our pictures is favourable we sell them well; if unfavourable we sell them less well. That is why we attach importance to printed criticism."

This speech, uttered in 1867, during the French Exhibition, did not fall upon deaf ears. From that time I ceased writing about the salon.

But for his delicate health and the fatigue incident to his art Eugène Fromentin would have been fond of society. The warm welcome he was greeted with in the Paris salons pleased him, and he liked the compliments ladies paid him. He would drop his eyes and seem to relish their praises. A good talker, with occasional flashes of eloquence, although a little too much inclined to enlarge upon the theory of art, he knew how to keep up what is called the ball of conversation. When he had overcome his first shyness he was sure to command attention. Although he was very small and had a sharp-featured face, there was a subtle refinement in his expression, something sarcastic and yet caressing. His was a velvet touch, but the talons were near the surface, although he was careful to hide them, and one guessed rather than felt their presence. He was vain, and took pains to please.

A voluminous letter writer, he wasted hours in frivolous correspondence. Certain drawers must contain numbers of letters written by him to more than one fair friend. He was liked and a little feared. Had he lived the Institute would certainly have enrolled him among its members.

The question has often been asked in my presence, Was Fromentin greater as a writer or as a painter? In my humble opinion this question should be answered unhesitatingly. Fromentin was primarily a writer. No single picture, nor all his paintings taken together, is worth "L'Eté dans le Sahara." That book is unique, a model of descriptive writing, and has never been approached by any writer, not even by Théophile Gautier.

Never have the sensations of light, and heat, and dryness, characteristic of Eastern scenery, been so powerfully rendered. The method employed is quite simple; there is no exaggeration, no attempt to use uncommon words, such as the strangeness of the scenes introduced to the reader might have justified. It is all natural, like a breath of desert wind passing over the sands.

The book is as real as is the relentless sky under which it was conceived. Each impression is reproduced and condensed with incomparable art, allied to simplicity.

Gautier admired it greatly, and used to say, "It is like concentrated sunshine." One seems to feel the burning sensation, and to walk in the streets of El-Aghouat under the perpendicular sunlight, which leaves only a narrow streak of shadow against the walls.

I esteem it a high honour that the *Revue de Paris* should have published this work, which was at once Fromentin's introduction to literature and his *chef d'œuvre*.

In it he reached his highest point at a bound; he could never have done anything better.

It seemed, in spite of his delicacy, as if Fromentin might have lived for years, for he had considerable

powers of resistance. He had outlived so much of weakness and suffering, but in the summer of 1876 he was attacked in his home at La Rochelle by a tumour in the mouth.

He died on the 24th August, in his fifty-sixth year, having been born on the 24th October, 1820. They buried him in the Saint Maurice Cemetery. There is no hearse used in that country, and the *confrairie* (confraternity) bore him upon their shoulders. The coffin which enclosed his frail remains was concealed by a coloured carpet, such as they lay upon the bier of a Hadjis they are carrying to the field of the dead.

He was borne along an arid and dusty road, not unlike one of those paths he had wandered over in his youth, and which he has fixed for ever upon his canvas or upon the written page.

The place held by Fromentin in literature and art has not been filled up. Many other painters have followed in the same direction, but have never been able to approach him. The writers who have tried to imitate him have not succeeded. It needed his dual gift to attain the same degree of excellence, a gift to which he owed the exceptional position he held among his contemporaries. Other painters have written, but he is the only painter with the pen of a master whose gift is spontaneous and his style naturally beautiful.

Eugène Delacroix also occasionally quitted the brush for the pen, but he only dealt with subjects bearing upon his art.

He ventured to write an article upon "The Last Judgment" of Michael Angelo, which he knew only through Sigalon's copy, for neither curiosity, nor self-distrust, nor artistic apprehension had ever taken him to Italy.

The man who painted the ceiling of the Apollo gallery at the Louvre and wrote ably of Gros and Prud'hon was also a man of uncommon parts. His fate was a strange one. In his youth it may be almost said that he was persecuted; in his prime he

was still misunderstood by the general public. Although a group of artists among whom he was famous strove in vain to impose their opinion upon the outside world, he began to be appreciated just when his eye and his hand were losing their power, and no sooner was he dead than he became celebrated. Even those who had sneered at his work now proclaimed him a master. The pictures he had found a difficulty in selling now fetch their weight in gold, and this artist, to whom in his lifetime the doors of exhibitions often remained closed, was spoken of in the same breath with Rubens and Tintoretto.

It is like the story of the poet Firdousy. When the treasures sent him by the Shah of Persia entered the town of Thous they had just laid him in the tomb.

It has been said in a book, which has recently appeared, that Delacroix was a natural son of Talleyrand's. I do not believe it. So much has been attributed to the Prince de Bénévent that now he has had Delacroix attributed to him. I was acquainted with Eugène Delacroix, and in my childhood I once saw Talleyrand, and, if my memory does not betray me, there was no resemblance between them.

When I was eleven or twelve years of age, about 1833 or '34, I went to some public ceremony with a relation of mine, who was what they then called an old General of the Empire. The dignitaries of the State thronged behind Louis Philippe, who greatly resembled the portraits of Louis XIV.

My relative said to me suddenly —

"Look at that man; he has sworn thirteen oaths of allegiance—it is Talleyrand—he and Fouché sold France to the allied powers and the Emperor to the English."

I saw a tall, pale old man with powdered hair. His face looked like death; it was livid in colour. His glance was lifeless but yet haughty, his lower lip hung down, and his shoulders were bowed. He



was so lame that he swayed from side to side in walking as if about to fall.

The face of this old demon of diplomacy has remained imprinted upon my memory just as I saw it then. Eugène Delacroix's appearance was entirely different. His deep-sunk eyes and enormous jaw reminded one of the muzzle of a leopard, and he had a sort of rugged beauty which was not without charm.

Nothing in the character of his mind, neither his parsimonious habits, nor his unsociable temperament, nor his aspirations, which were not always guided by the bent of his genius, not a single trait of the outer or inner man recalled the Prince de Talleyrand.

Doubtless this story was invented in the salons, spread by idle gossip, and circulated among the frivolous. Besides, I do not know how Eugène Delacroix's mother had come to deserve such an affront.

Delacroix was a man of culture and knew the world, as the saying is. Against his will he went by the name of the chief of the revolutionary school in painting, and he seemed to protest against the imputation by his scrupulously correct behaviour and his courteous bearing. Whatever the judgment pronounced upon his painting his love of work deserved the highest respect. The number of sketches and studies of every kind of effect he produced was enormous. The vast accumulation of these artistic notes prove that he was continually occupied with his art. His heavy hand must have grown weary sometimes of perpetual drawing, and he gave his brain but little rest.

Charles Varnhagen von Ense has said, "An artist is a man whose ideas form themselves into pictures."

According to this definition Delacroix was, in the truest sense, an artist, and he was right when he declared, "It is only with the help of my palette that I am able to see."

Few painters have had a higher conception of

their art. He would have made an admirable professor of the fine arts. How, then, is it possible to account for the fact that his execution fell so far short of his theory? Why did he never rise above the second or even third rank and cannot be placed beside the great masters, I mean the greatest masters, such as Michael Angelo, Raphaël, Titian, Lionardo, Corregio, Velasquez, and Rembrandt?

I think he wanted training, that his early art education had been inadequate, and that he never acquired the degree of manual skill, the accuracy in drawing, the perfection of technique only to be gained in youth.

It seems to me that his apprenticeship was incomplete, that he left the schools too soon, for only in them can a man obtain facility such as the trained craftsman possesses.

He did not sufficiently realize that if the artist conceives it is the craftsman who must execute and impart that form to his conception which alone can give it value.

This was the true reason, in my opinion, of his unequal strength, of that faulty draughtsmanship, which caused him to be so much misjudged by the public.

While other artists would see only his merits and praised him to the skies, the indifferent or ignorant crowd saw nothing but his faults and turned away from his pictures. Both parties were in the wrong, for the imperfections of his style were quite as obvious as its qualities. A famous saying might have been applied to him: "It was an intellectual gift to which his physical faculties did not do justice," for nothing was ever more true. His eye failed to see things truly, and his hand had its moments of weakness.

He did not despise beauty as people imagined, but he could not reproduce it. Colour fascinated him, and yet he was aware that his drawing was defective, and he would give way to despair. Raphaël he had studied profoundly from engrav-

ings; he found certain combinations of carved lines in his works which entirely charmed him. I often discussed art and painting with him, and I should surprise more than one reader were I to say that he was a convinced member of the classical school in painting. It would seem as if his want of manual dexterity and his want of knowledge of drawing must necessarily have made of him a passionate romanticist; not his merit, but his failings placed him at the head of that school of art. In conversation with intimate friends he did not conceal his preferences, bowed down before David's pictures, and thought that in poetry Voltaire's "Tancred" was a *chef-d'œuvre*.

People poured out their praises and complimented him on having broken with the old traditions in a way that distressed and annoyed him, for he imagined that their applause might affect him by closing the doors of the institute.

Like many another artist who has been considered an innovator originally somewhat against his own desire, in the end he accepted the character imputed to him, no longer strove to change anything in his style, and began to build up a system of art based upon his own defects as if to bring them into the greater prominence. This was the theory he gave forth:—

"Colour should be the predominating note in a picture, because it is by colour that the first impression is produced upon the eye. The drawing and the arrangement produce secondary effects, and, therefore, should be treated as subsidiary to the colouring." The process was more musical than plastic, and some of his works are symphonies rather than pictures. His "Entrée des Croisés à Constantinople" is a symphony in blue major, whilst his "Barque des Naufragés" is a symphony in green minor, with the key-note in red. In order to emphasize the pallid aspect of the sailors in the latter subject he introduces a dash of vermillion; one of the figures wears a red cloak. Such expedients are

ingenious, but are more appropriate to the scene-painter's art than to the artist who has to produce easel pictures.

When he had to do simply with colour his ingenuity and skill were perfectly marvellous. I remember one evening that there was a basket near him upon a table full of skeins of wool. He arranged the skeins, twisted them together, separated the different shades, and produced a wonderful effect of colour upon his canvas. I also remember hearing him say: "Some of the finest pictures I ever saw were in Persian carpets," but I am inclined to doubt the sincerity of such speeches.

This love of colour for its own sake sometimes enabled him to achieve wonderful successes of this description. In his picture, "Justinien," formerly at the "Conseil d'Etat," and which was burnt by the Commune, the precious stones scattered over the buskins worn by some of the figures and the bindings in which the code was contained seemed as if they might be touched and handled. Never was the play of light upon gems so perfectly rendered. The gold stuffs in his "Femmes Mauresques" are enough to cause the despair of an embroideress. I can recollect a portrait he painted of a fair young woman who had a refined and regular type of beauty. Delacroix only succeeded in producing a caricature of the face. On the other hand, the pearl necklace which encircles her throat is an admirable effect of illusion. It was thus that in his pictures he would often neglect the figures, and occupy himself almost exclusively with an accessory he had admired for its colouring.

When the element of colour is absent in his compositions he sometimes becomes grotesque, as is seen in the designs for his lithographed illustrations for the works of Shakespeare and of Goethe. Hamlet never ceases to be poetic even in his madness, nor Faust even, when he calls the Devil to his aid, but who can attach any poetic idea to those grinning creatures Delacroix imagined and represented with

eyes minus pupil, lash, or eyebrow? They assume distorted attitudes, are hump-backed, have knotted fingers, and are both sensational and vulgar. Here and there is a stroke of genius, but it must be looked for amid so much that is abnormal and eccentric.

I cannot doubt that Delacroix was aware of the unequal character of his work. His studio was always over-heated, for he constantly dreaded the cold, wore a woollen spencer, and enveloped his throat, which was delicate, in an enormous cravat, even in that stifling atmosphere. He gave way too much to his own feelings, and abandoned himself to the sort of excitement which consumes the artist like a fever. One evening I was with him in his studio at the Rue Notre-Dame-de-Lorette. I lay upon a divan and watched him work. We were silent, and he had forgotten that I was present. He was painting a small picture of what he called a "Fantasia." A horseman in full gallop was represented. He had thrown his gun into the air, and had raised his hand to catch it in its fall. One could hear the artist breathing heavily while he painted with astonishing rapidity. The horseman's hand grew larger every moment, until it was bigger than the head.

"My dear master," at length I exclaimed, "what are you about?"

Delacroix uttered a cry of surprise, as if I had awoke him suddenly from sleep.

"It is too hot here," he said; "I am going mad."

Then with a wild air he took his pallet-knife mechanically, and removed the hand, gave the ground of his picture a few strokes with the brush, as if to calm himself, and then turned to me: "It grows late. Shall we go out?"

Presently we were walking along side by side in silence. In the Rue Lafitte he paused in front of a picture dealer's shop, and looked for some time at one of his own pictures exhibited in the window. Archimedes is represented seated at a table, upon which one observes with some surprise a leaden

inkstand and a pen, while above him is a red thunder-cloud, enclosing the javelin about to descend and strike him.

"Outside the studio," said Delacroix, "I see my work, but at home I cannot see it any more. I am like Sancho in the Island of Barataria—I need a physician who should touch me with his wand when I am about to give myself an indigestion." We walked on, and I listened to what he was saying. "What a miserable fate it is to conceive a *chef-d'œuvre* in the brain, to reflect upon it, and see it perfected in the eye of the mind, and when one tries to fix it upon the canvas to be unable to reproduce the ideal image which constantly eludes one's grasp. Hard to be like Ixion who, when he would enfold the goddess, only embraces a cloud. When I am painting one picture I am thinking of another, and I follow the dictates of my dream as you saw just now. They say that work becomes an infatuation; I know that it intoxicates."

It was autumn, and already dark as we walked along the boulevard. Jupiter shone out brighter than the other stars, and seemed to be of unusual size. Delacroix remarked —

"When I was a child I thought all that had been created for me. When I have attempted to paint night effects they have made me despair. There is a depth in the colouring, and a harmony which it is impossible to render." He was in a bitter mood, for he went on without a pause, "Ah! you writers! How much harm your praises do us in the public estimation, and how much pain your criticisms give us! We do not know what our position is, whether we are in the first rank or in the lowest. There are days when all seems certain, and others when one doubts of everything. What would I not give to come back in a hundred years and to know what is thought of me then!"

I was on the point of saying to him, "They will place you between Tiepolo and Jouvenet," but I did not dare.

When his thoughts were free he could be witty and playful—an agreeable talker. He was sought after in society, but although he met with social success he was never drawn aside by it. He loved his work too well to give himself up to frivolous occupations. Time was to him the most precious of gifts; he never wasted it, and like all really industrious men he marked its passage with the greatest anxiety, for no sooner had he completed one work than he conceived another. He was only happy in his studio, and lived entirely in it by preference, for there he seemed to have gathered round him an atmosphere of dreams which partly charmed and partly discouraged him, but was necessary to his well-being. He felt himself, as it were, surrounded by his aspirations, his hopes, and his disappointments, and could not tear himself away.

When forced by weariness of both hand and brain to lay aside his pallet he would sometimes throw himself down upon a divan and pick out an air upon his mandoline. Then if any slatternly girl from the neighbourhood, with her handkerchief wound round her head, and list shoes upon her feet, would drop in and dance before him it gave him pleasure. Did he really see her on those occasions? Surely she was transformed by his dream, and he once more beheld in idea the Arab dancing-girl who, swaying her body from side to side, and rattling her crotalum, had appeared before him in Morocco. [Those who live like Delacroix, chiefly through the imagination, can conjure up the past and enjoy sensations suggested by some trifling association such as reality will not always afford.]

Delacroix was fifty when I knew him. No one would have taken him for that age, because his face retained the appearance of youth. His existence was then a very quiet one, but this had not been the case formerly. He had occasionally given way to youthful excesses, and would allude to the noisy excitements he had not despised with complacency. He had some pleasant memories of the

past, spoke of his master, Pierre Guérin, in terms of affectionate respect, and said of Géricault —

“His death was a great misfortune to me.”

Indeed, it was quite clear that Géricault, a man of dominant will, had exercised a great influence over him, an influence which after ten years of work of artistic development his pictures still needed. He used to tell that when Géricault would say to him, “Your drawing should be bolder, your outlines firmer; there should be muscles underneath your drapery,” his heart would beat and he would set to work with the one thought, “If only I am able to satisfy him!”

Everything appertaining to Géricault interested me, for the artist who painted the “*Méduse*” had been an intimate friend of my family’s when I was a very unimportant factor. He was staying with one of my relations when the accident happened which had such a fatal result. Géricault was going out for a ride with Horace Vernet. According to the fashion of the day he was in breeches and top-boots. The buckle which fastened his breeches broke; the tongue became useless, so that the waistband hung loose. At Géricault’s own request my relative fastened the two ends of the waistband in a knot. Two hours after Géricault fell from his horse on to a heap of stones for macadamizing the road. He fell upon his back, and the knot grazed one of the vertebræ and injured the spine. Inflammation set in, accompanied by terrible agony, which lasted until his death, ten months later.

It will be remembered that after his death his picture, the “*Radeau de la Méduse*,” was put up to auction, and narrowly escaped being taken to London, in which case France would have lost it for ever. De Dreux Dorcy bought it back for six thousand francs. Later on the money was returned by the Comte de Forbin, Director of the Royal Museums, who had the picture placed in the galleries of the Louvre.



Delacroix assured me that in spite of his surface arrogance Géricault was really modest and self-distrustful. He related the following anecdote:—Géricault was living in Rome at the same time as Pradier, who was trained at the Villa Médicis. Pradier saw a pen and ink sketch of Géricault's done from memory of a scene he had witnessed, and also inspired by a bas-relief by Mythras. It represented a naked herdsman felling a bull.

The movements of both the man and the animal were rendered with such force and accuracy that Pradier could not repress a cry of admiration, and exclaimed —

“You are a great artist, and will be one of the masters!”

Géricault was gratified, but when he was alone he discovered, or thought that he had discovered, some defects, and he imagined that Pradier, a *lauréat de l'Institut* and holder of the *Grand Prix de Sculpture*, had been laughing at him. Now, although he liked to ridicule others, he could not endure ridicule himself. He sent seconds to Pradier, and demanded either an apology or satisfaction by duel.

Pradier was unable to understand what it all meant, and went to Géricault's house to ask for an explanation. After it had been given the two artists embraced one another, and Géricault cried —

“Is it possible that I have genius?”

In moments of expansion, and these, with his impressionable nature, were frequent, and seemed almost inevitable, he would say to me, “It is owing to Géricault's death that the French school is without a head, and that everything is in confusion; everyone works on his own account, imagines that he develops his own individuality, and slides naturally into commonplace methods of conception, of execution, and of composition.”

I grant that he would have been a severe master, perhaps a despot, but he would have known how to bring back the wanderers to the right path, and he

would have saved historical painting, the grand style of painting. Its days are numbered now, and it will be replaced by genre painting, or rather by the upholsterer's art.

I have often regretted when hearing Delacroix explain his views that he could not have lectured on the æsthetics of art and expounded its principles, which he understood thoroughly, although he sometimes failed to put them in practice.

Of contemporaries he spoke with discretion and the reserve of a well-bred man. I have already said that he only spoke in praise of David, but he chiefly admired "Marat," "Le Couronnement," and certain of his portraits. Among Gros's pictures he gave his unqualified admiration to the "Pestiférés de Jaffa," which he considered a *chef d'œuvre*. He would smile and relate that after the salon of 1822, when he exhibited his "Barque de Dante," he was then only twenty-three years of age, Gros sent for him, and said, in an ill-tempered voice, "As for colour, boy, well—you are a colourist, but you draw like a pig!"

Gros's death was still a sore subject with him, and he did not hesitate to pronounce certain names in this connection, and to denounce them. After the ill-success of his picture, "Hercule et Diomède," and the insults which were heaped upon him, after he had been called turgid in his colouring, wanting in transparency, and an old fossil, he did not at once throw himself into the river, as the papers stated. He followed the course of the Seine until he was opposite the Lower Meudon; there he drove his cane into the bank and placed his hat, in which were his cravat and his handkerchief, upon it, then he lay down in scarcely more than two feet of water and waited for death, with his face pressed into the sand and his hands crossed over his head.

Delacroix knew the names of those who had formed the cabal which had worked such dire results. I could mention them all, but to what purpose? Their names are unknown. Those

painters and sculptors who considered that the artist of the "Bataille d'Eylau" and of the cupola of the Pantheon was a disgrace to the French school had their own works exhibited. The public looked at them, shrugged its shoulders, and passed on. Not one of those artists ever rose above mediocrity. Although the ascendancy of a master of his art displeased them, this jealous feeling could not diminish their irremediable inferiority, which was the product of ignorance, indolence, and envy.

Gros drowned himself on the 25th June, 1835, when he was sixty-four years of age, but he had been slowly dying for a long time. Most of what he had loved and admired in his youth was passing away —

"Gaiment à coups d'épingle ou bien à coups de pieds ;"

his dearest beliefs were being taken from him one by one. They told him that David, Gérard, and Girodet were Philistines (literally *wigs*, *peruques*), that Raphaël was mechanical, Lionardo rococo; Michael Angelo alone had some merit, and Titian some character. He took these ravings seriously, despaired, and stopped his ears when people said that Eugène Déveria's "Naissance de Henri IV." was finer than the finest productions of the Venetian school. His studio, once so crowded and so famous, was now abandoned; at last, he had only one pupil. That pupil he made much of, and tried to advise wisely and tenderly. One day he entered the studio unexpectedly; the pupil had not time to hide the picture he was painting. It was a moonlight scene; a rope ladder hung from a Gothic balcony, upon which stood a young girl who extended her arms towards a young man in a doublet and slashed hose, and with a feather in his cap.

Gros said, "What is that?"

The pupil looked a little confused, and replied, "It is 'Romeo and Juliet.'"

"Ah!" ejaculated Gros, "Shakespeare! And our poor Homer, is he, then, quite forgotten?"

Those who had driven him to his death did not grudge him a splendid funeral. The horses were taken out of the hearse, the coffin was carried on the shoulders of his comrades, speeches were delivered at the grave, and it was generally admitted that a great man had been sacrificed.

## CHAPTER IX.

### SOME OTHERS.

THE exhibition of 1855, I mean l'Exposition des Beaux Arts, was of exceptional interest. For the first time the English school of painting was well represented, and a cartoon of the Tower of Babel by Kaulbach revealed to our eyes the great decorative German school and the right method of illustrating history in the plastic arts. The strength of the French school was put forth in the room set apart for the works of Ingres, Delacroix, and Decamps. At a glance, as it were, one could see the immense results our artists had achieved since the days of David, who, towards the end of the eighteenth century, became the first chief of the French school; how step by step new paths had been opened out which had given each artist scope and enabled him to develop his special gifts and tendencies in his own way. There was no similarity between Delacroix, Ingres, and Decamps, no point of contact, and yet each was an artist of indisputable power. The truth is that we appreciate in a picture, not an exact copy of nature, but the interpretation of nature, the personal note, so to speak, of the artist's mind, something more original, more elevated, wider, more general and sympathetic than the impressions of the crowd.

Art is that which the public neither sees nor comprehends unless it has it explained to it, the intrinsic beauty of things recognized and made manifest. It is for this reason that impressionists, realists, and naturalists may paint pictures, but they can never

produce art. They will be skilful craftsmen and conscientious copyists, but not artists. At that time, subjects such as who was superior to the other in drawing and who in colouring were freely discussed among us without any agreement being arrived at, for, without remembering that a picture is only perfect when the composition, the drawing, and the colouring harmonize absolutely, each critic was apt to be carried away by his own personal predilections.

A conversation which took place on the 26th May, in my presence, enlightened me with respect to the judgments formed by artists upon one another's work. Prince Napoleon, President of the Commissioners for the Universal Exhibition, was giving a *fête* in the apartments of the Palais-Royal. It was a large gathering, and almost every kind of society was represented. Ambassadors rubbed shoulders with business men, and Ministers talked with journalists in friendly fashion.

I remember Louise Colet, overflowing with spirits, talking loud, gesticulating, and trying to attract attention, with her shoulders freely exposed to view. She walked round the room on Babinet's arm, who played his part of *sigisbeo* with a rather sullen air.

I was in the company of Jadin, Delacroix, and Horace Vernet, and stood with them in the embrasure of a window. Horace Vernet, resplendent with orders and decorations, hummed an air, and cast all-conquering glances at the ladies, which, but for his grey hair, might have been invincible. Jadin talked for a long time of M. Ingres' work, and, according to his custom, mingled serious and jesting remarks so cleverly that it was difficult to know if he were really in earnest.

Delacroix said, "Notwithstanding his faults, one must admit that Ingres has some of the qualities of an artist."

Horace Vernet started.

"Ingres! some of the qualities of an artist! Why, he is the greatest painter of the century!"

Jadin turned his sarcastic eye upon Vernet, and Delacroix inquired —

“What do you find so remarkable in him? Is it his drawing?”

“No; he draws like a chimney-sweep!”

“Is it his colouring?”

“Bah! all his pictures are the colour of rye-bread!”

“Well, is it his composition?”

“Are you joking? He has never known how to group his figures. Think of his ‘Saint Symphorien.’ It is a kind of scramble.”

“Is it, then, in the modelling of his flesh, or in his faithful reproduction of nature?”

“Modelling—reproduction of nature! You must be mad! He paints from his lay figure. If you do not believe me, go and see his ‘Age d’Or,’ at the Château de Dampierre.”

“But if he has not a single merit,” retorted Delacroix, beginning to laugh, “how can he be the greatest painter of the century?”

Vernet, with a stammer, rejoined, “I tell you that he is our only great painter; and I suggested that the jury should grant him a special medal as an exceptional mark of distinction. We do honour to France when we do honour to her men of genius.”

We looked at one another, and it was difficult to keep calm.

Vernet was irritated; he took my arm, and we walked in the direction of a room where a military band was playing the opening music of the “Gazza Ladra.”

Vernet said to me, “Is it not pitiable to hear Delacroix, who is himself incapable of making one of his figures stand upright upon the canvas, and mistakes the legs of a cow for the legs of a horse, deny the genius of Père Ingres? It is jealousy. Now, I am not like that. My greatest pleasure is to recognize the merit of others.”

He then left me to speak to the Princesse M—,

and I went back to Delacroix. He was just saying to Jadin, "Poor Vernet! he imagines he knows how to paint!"

Jadin did not reply, but looked round the room as if in search of someone.

Delacroix said to him, "Who are you looking for?" and he answered, "I was only looking for the Père Ingres, to ask him what is his opinion of you."

Delacroix might have told him, for he knew it. A banker who was but little acquainted with the dissensions which divided the French school had had the unlucky idea, some days before, of inviting several artists, among whom were Ingres and Delacroix, to dine at his house.

Delacroix was received with honour, and Ingres was fêted. Ingres, that little, florid man, with his narrow forehead and obstinate air, his large stomach, big hands, and short legs, expressed himself badly, was full of prejudice, and thought that, after Raphaël, the world had come to a standstill. He had a high opinion of himself, and knew that he was a great man. Wherever he went he expected to take the lead, never asked the names of those he met, and regarded them all in the light of admirers.

The dinner began. In the course of it Ingres showed signs of impatience. He had just learnt that Delacroix was among the guests, and he was annoyed. To think that he, Ingres, the adorer of the god Sanzio, to whom he played the part of Grand Llama, he, the most orthodox of men, should be seated at the same table with that heretic, that renegade, and have to break bread with him! The thought excited him, and his eyes rolled furiously. Delacroix, who had perceived these glances several times, assumed the rather pretentious air usual with him when he did not feel at his ease.

Ingres tried to restrain himself, but he did not succeed. After dinner, holding a cup of coffee in his hand, he suddenly approached Eugene Delacroix, who was standing near the chimney-piece,



and said to him, "Sir! Drawing means honesty, it means honour!" He became excited, so excited by what he was saying that he upset his cup of coffee over the front of his shirt and of his waistcoat, and exclaimed, "It is too bad!" Then he seized his hat and said, "I am going; I will not stay here to be insulted any longer!"

People gathered round and tried to pacify him, but in vain. When he reached the door he turned round. "Yes, sir!" he repeated, "it is honour; it is honesty!"

Delacroix had remained immovable. Diaz, who was present, struck his wooden leg and said to the lady of the house, who was quite out of countenance, "Madame, he is an old pedant; but for the respect I owe you I would have run my pestle through his body." That raised a laugh, but the incident had made too much impression, and the harmony of the evening was disturbed.

Delacroix had the good taste to enlarge upon the qualities which entitled M. Ingres to be considered a distinguished painter; he added, "Sometimes it is difficult not to be exclusive when one is very gifted."

Auguste Préault, he who sculptured few fine statues, but who uttered many a *bon mot*, and had his praises sung in so many articles, said of Ingres and Delacroix, "They are two brothers, both ill, who are at enmity with one another. Eteocles has jaundice, and Polynices measles."

These jokes irritated Ingres and amused Delacroix, who was a witty man, and besides liked Préault, to whom he has been wrongly compared. They are separated by a wide distance, and time can only increase the space which divides them. Eugene Delacroix's work will endure because it is the product of a rare combination of qualities; Préault's will perish because it is disfigured by inaccuracies, which are the result of ignorance. His statues often deviate from the truth of nature to such an extent that they are worthy to be placed in an orthopædic hospital.

Never did I see a man so anxious to possess the Cross of the Legion of Honour or torture himself more to obtain it. He had solicited it on all sides and from every Government. He used to say rather drolly, "I have been producing bad sculpture for forty years; surely that deserves a reward!"

His jokes are celebrated; some of them were cruel and cost him dear.

The director of the Beaux Arts during the reign of Louis Philippe was called Cavé. He owed his post to the Soirées de Neuilly. He had published a collection of dramatic proverbs under the Restoration with the help of an officer of the Royal Guard called Dittmer; his *nom de plume* was Fougéray. Upon this slight foundation Cavé had built an unparalleled superstructure of literary vanity; "we writers" would occur in every other sentence of his, to the great amusement of his auditors. Préault went to see him to try and get a commission from him. Cavé replied with the good-humoured self-importance of the head of a department, "But, you know, my dear Préault, you are not a sculptor; you are a literary man." Préault retorted, "A literary man! About as much as you are."

It was a speech which did not help him to get employment. At a later date, under the Empire, as he was passing one morning along the Place du Carrousel, he observed Fould, the Minister of State, and Lefuel, the architect of the Louvre, examining the buildings covered with statues which surround the Square Napoléon.

He bowed, and Fould called him to them, "Well, Préault, what do you think of that?" Préault replied, "That is like a sort of classical *cul-de-sac*!" Lefuel drew himself up, but Préault continued, "There are too many people upon the ramparts, my dear friend, too many people upon the ramparts!"

It was not kind to make such a remark in the

hearing of the Minister and in the presence of the architect who had constructed the palace, but it was also ungrateful, for Lefuel had given Préault an order for some extensive decorative works.

He was most ingenious when he wished to find excuses for the imperfections of his statues, and on the ground of symbolic allusion would try to excuse inexcusable errors. I once asked him why his statue of Marceau at Chartres was knock-kneed and had such thick legs.

He replied, "Why, can you not guess? My intention is to represent both the youth of Marceau and the youth of modern France of the Republic. Observe all young dogs, they have thick paws." When he sculptured the "Gaulois" leading a horse, which is at the Pont d'Jéna, he said to me, "It is not a horse as yet; it will be one by-and-bye. It is a quadruped swollen by the damp of the marshes of Gaul. The whole thing is prehistoric, and symbolizes the primitive period of our history. It was Michelet who discovered that. He saw at once what I wanted to do, although I was not clear about it myself."

He often modelled grotesque forms with his unskilful hand. Referring to his bas-relief for the Ollivier tomb, he said, "I sculptured a young woman gathering a flower."

In reality he sculptured a cook taking some white broth. He rebelled sometimes against what he called the unfriendly attitude of the public towards him, and would compare himself to Delacroix. "I accomplish," he would say, "a similar work in sculpture to that he carries out in painting." This was a radical error on his part, although one it was useless to discuss with him.

Sculpture, "that white art," as Louis de Cormanin used to call it, must be kept to its precision of outline and purity of form. By means of colour the painter can produce impressions and illusions such as form alone is incapable of representing. In other words a man who is clothed can conceal an external

infirmity, a naked man must expose of necessity. Sculpture is a naked art even when it is draped; it has no colouring to hide its blemishes.

Although his tongue was a little too sharp, and sometimes damaged his best interests, Préault was a pleasant companion. He was very ugly, had been operated upon for a squint, spoke in a piping voice, which accentuated his witticisms, was sociable, glad to make the acquaintance of men of position, found friends wherever he went, and was obliging and straightforward. If he met an acquaintance he always seemed glad to have come across him, and always found something pleasant to say. He did not understand the art of talking, shot out his sentences and would not submit to the restraints of ordinary conversation. A work he often consulted was the collection of maxims and aphorisms he had made. He might have said :

“ Ibo intro ad libros et discam de dictis melioribus,”

like Gelasimus in the “ Stichus ” of Plautus.

After his death it was proposed to publish this note-book, but the idea was abandoned because it was found that he had collected the sayings from every source, even from La Bruyère and La Rochefoucauld.

Another man who was famous in Paris for his *bons mots* at the same time as Préault went by the pseudonym of Laurent-Jan. His real name was Laurent, and for long he was known by that of Lausanne, his mother's name. He could use the pen, the brush, and the pencil, but not to any great purpose. One of the contributors of the *Charivari* he provided the acid element of the “ Carillons.” About the year 1840 he was given a commission to decorate the landing place of the mail boats of the Mediterranean, just constructed at the La Ciotat Dockyard, and under the Empire he superintended the decorations of the apartments of the Ministère d'Etat. He was a thorough Parisian, only at home between the Faubourg Montmartre and the Rue de

la Chaussée d'Antin, and had a horror of the country. Like Théophile Gautier he was ready to affirm, "Trees are to the earth what mould is to cheese," and said, "The finest view in nature is not to be compared to a wall covered with advertisements." He paced the asphalte, his hands in his pockets, with his bowed legs, his ill-made figure, swayed his big head from side to side, munched a cigar, and fired off his *bons mots*. Indulgence to obscure people was not a feature in his character, but superiority, the superiority of intellect of character and of great gifts, he could not forgive. Indeed, he never forgave anyone.

In his youth he had been exposed to a rather singular danger, which he was keen enough to elude. He was in the habit of visiting at the house of a man called Garat, who had a high position at the Banque de France, and who had received into his family a young relative, I think his niece. This niece was called Marie Capelle, and was a good deal talked of later on. There was natural affinity between her and Laurent-Jan. They were both proud and caustic spirits, coveted fame and fortune, and liked to vie with one another in telling the ill-natured stories they were always ready to invent. There was so much mutual attraction, they were so often together, and apparently sought one another's society so constantly that people thought they must be attached. M. Garat, anxious to be quit of his niece, made some matrimonial proposals to Laurent-Jan, who did not repulse them. They did not actually sign the marriage contract, but were on the point of doing so. Laurent-Jan, who then went by the name of Lausanne, was not eager for the marriage, but he was not averse to it. Besides, he imagined a marriage with the niece of M. Garat would advance his fortunes. He observed, however, that although Marie Capelle was present at the family meals she ate scarcely anything, rarely picked at the wing of a chicken or tasted a little fruit. He said to himself in joke, "That will be an

economy for our housekeeping." But the matter aroused his suspicions, for he did not believe in ethereal beings who can live on nothing. He began to observe her, or rather to spy upon her actions, and he obtained convincing proof of the fact that, secretly, the future Madame Lausanne partook freely of mutton cutlets, beef-steaks, and Burgundy. Laurent-Jan took this very usual symptom in hysterical girls for hypocrisy. Now, whatever his other failings, he had the merit of hating hypocrisy, and he informed M. Garat that he did not wish to marry his niece. When Marie Capelle, then Madame Lafarge, was accused of crime, theft, and poison, Laurent-Jan said, "I should be ungrateful, indeed, did I not believe in Providence. I have no fancy for arsenic."

His brain was like an alembic, in which ideas formed combinations until they produced a precipitate in the shape of some strange maxim or aphorism. Sometimes he condensed his sentences to such a degree that they became unintelligible, and then called people fools because they failed to understand him. As Montesquieu puts it, "those who strain after wit are apt to fall into folly." This was Laurent-Jan's case. He admired nothing in the literary productions of his own time except point and smartness, a weakness which narrowed his horizon and restricted him mentally to the pen and the *bon mot*. Emile Augier had just obtained a great success with a five-act play at the Comédie Française. I was present at the first representation, and after the piece was over I came out with Laurent-Jan. I was in a state of enthusiasm, and, further, excited by the circumstance that the author was my friend; Laurent-Jan was simply furious.

I said to him, "I thought you were a friend of Augier's?"

He replied, "What does that signify? Is it not absurd to think that the fellow is perhaps going to make three hundred thousand francs with a

piece which contains fewer *bons mots* than a single article in the *Charivari*."

In spite of his high opinion of his own gifts, he knew how incompetent he was, and would struggle to overcome his difficulty of expression, but in vain. A note of three lines cost him an hour's reflection; he would rack his brains, and finally produce some pretentious sentence meant to be brilliantly clever, but which was really only bombastic. He wrote with Balzac the "*Misanthropie sans Repentir*," a book which strains at wit but only achieves dulness. He put forth ideas in general conversation which were simply detestable. From de Maistre and Bonald he had culled a kind of catechism which astonished simple-minded people, but revolted the cultured.

He was in favour of upholding religion with the faggot and the stake, and of governing with the help of the scaffold. Severe to others, but indulgent to himself, he had adopted for his own use a kind of morality which he found exceedingly convenient.

It is true that he admired the type of the religious woman who is devoted to duty, constant in prayer, and whose example elevates her husband, but he sometimes forgot an anonymous volume, illustrated here and there with undraped figures, upon the tables of the ladies at whose houses he visited. He was a misanthrope and avoided his kind, like Molière's *Alceste* longed for—

" Un endroit écarté,  
Où d'être homme d'honneur on ait la liberté."

At the same time he was willing to air his paradoxes in houses where delicate wines and truffled capons were plentiful. He liked to be treated with consideration, and was offended if his inconsistencies were remarked. If, however, he saw that his listener was not deceived by his affectation, he would lower his tone and try to make himself agreeable, not an easy matter. He never restrained his tongue, and was in the habit of criticising everything.

On one occasion he happened to be in the private room of one of the Cabinet Ministers near the time of the distribution of prizes to be awarded after the close of the Beaux Arts exhibition. He was heard to remark, "It would be well in the speech which will have to be made to avoid, if possible, the usual commonplaces employed on such occasions. To repeat the same empty phrases time after time is to invite the ridicule of artists generally."

The Minister summoned an official at the head of a department, and directed him to prepare a discourse which should avoid stereotyped expressions such as had justified Laurent-Jan's complaint. This official sent for Laurent-Jan, and said to him, "The Minister wishes to make a speech which shall not be a repetition of former ones. At this moment he is unusually busy, and has no time to compose his discourse. It seems to me that you are better qualified than anyone to find the correct ideas and the suitable expressions for such an occasion. May I ask you to prepare the address according to your own views of how the subject should be treated, and to bring me what you have written in three or four days. I shall be prepared to offer you five hundred francs."

Laurent-Jan was not minded to let slip the wind-fall, and he wrote to one of his friends, "The Minister has charged me to write his address to the artists—three pages are enough, a few high-sounding phrases about the future of France, and a reference to the glories of the 16th century, which the intelligence and initiative of the French genius is capable of reviving. You will grasp the situation; set to work and send me the required production. They expect it immediately." Laurent-Jan's friend was staying with me in the country, and deep in a short story he was writing for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. I was free, and I undertook to write a discourse, which the Minister accepted without comment. It was certainly one of the most commonplace speeches he ever made.



The painter Landelle once remarked to Laurent-Jan, "You ought to try to do something." Laurent-Jan was angry, and answered him, "It is enough for me to be somebody." Nevertheless, he had to try and do something, for his life was growing more and more difficult, and the author of the "*Misanthropie sans Repentir*" was too well known in certain coffee-houses and too little known to the public, besides he was not the kind of man who bears privation with fortitude. His friends took the matter in hand, spared themselves no trouble, and knocked at a great many doors on his behalf.

Finally Laurent-Jan, the man who despised every author, dramatic or otherwise, ridiculed every artist, and freely abused every minister, senator, deputy, *conseiller d'état*, lawyer and banker of the day, obtained the post of director to the Municipal School of Design in the Rue de l'Ecole de Médecine. He was not grateful for an appointment which simply placed him above want, and thought that the work was a degradation. A ceaseless flow of slander and abuse is detestable, and therefore it was not easy after this event to associate with him. The unhappy man had gone through life denouncing everyone, forgiving no one, and in the end the love of slander became with him a form of disease. He could not help speaking ill of people, even of those who had tried to help him and were still trying to do so. When he died a lonely death no one regretted him. At one time I had known him, but I learnt to avoid him, for his serpent's tongue repelled me. The man who feels that the success or the happiness of another makes him suffer is greatly to be pitied, and I pitied Laurent-Jan, until compelled to listen to his slanders, and then my compassion changed to another sentiment. Outwardly the poor man resembled one of Hoffmann's heroes, and his singularly grotesque appearance may possibly have had some influence upon his unhappy disposition. Maitre Coppelius must have been like him, abrupt in his movements, with a sharp face and pointed

knees. Another individual in a different way quite as eccentric as Laurent-Jan, who settled in Paris towards the end of the Restoration and had some social influence during the reign of Louis Philippe, was Dr. Koreff, who reminded one of Councillor Crespel in the Violon de Crémone. He was short, thick-lipped, and winked his eyes, dressed abominably, and wore a wig *à l'enfant*, part of which was the colour of tow and the rest of it grizzled. He spoke slowly with a strong Teutonic accent, but his jokes were not wanting in flavour or point; he lived a fast life and made no secret of it, was sceptical and out at elbows. One of the seven who formed that Serapion Club over which Hoffmann had presided, from under the table, he had come to Paris from Berlin. His position was peculiar. He had brought a letter of recommendation from Humboldt to Cuvier, who had received and patronised him, and an intimacy with Løeve-Weimars had given him the opening to the artistic and literary world. As physician to the Prussian Embassy, he was introduced by the Ambassador to the best Parisian society. Now the highest society, though very exclusive to French people, is most amiable to foreigners. They are welcomed and petted because there is no danger of social complications, so Dr. Koreff became a favourite in more than one fashionable circle. His ugliness and free talk were thought original, his cynicism was regarded as wit, and his broken French was an added charm. Koreff became the fashion. The ladies would look up under their eyes and say, "Do you know Dr. Koreff? He is perfectly delightful!"

A Madame Koreff existed, but she was very little talked of, although she was often seen. She was fat, had a flat nose, and was pitted with small-pox. An enormous gold chain wandered over the black satin bosom of her dress, the buckle at her waist sparkled brilliantly, and to hide the point where her brown front was attached to her head, she wore an

enamelled brooch. She stared at people through gleaming eye-glasses, and wore a number of rings. The resemblance she bore to a South Sea Island goddess decked out on a day of sacrifice was striking. When she passed by in her low landau she looked as if she were being drawn along in a bathing-machine with two horses. Dr. Koreff and his wife occasionally drove in the Champs-Élysées, and people who saw them would wonder if those two strange figures had escaped from a company of marionettes. An air of mystery surrounded the doctor; his manner was strange, he would break off suddenly and leave people, and now and then fall into a profound reverie. Well-informed people had come to the conclusion that he must be a spy, a society spy. Poor Koreff had never acted the spy, but this injurious suspicion flattered his self-importance, which was great. He did not contradict the report, and laid it to the account of his vanity. But it is right to do him justice. He was one of the first with Benech—almost as great a charlatan as himself—to combat the system of starvation then prescribed to their patients by French doctors; to renounce the frequent blood-letting still in vogue among the disciples of Broussais, and to recommend a stimulating diet, tonics, and open-air life. He had realized that old races are always threatened by anæmia. It was he also who took vigorous steps to have the doors of the opera-house opened to Meyerbeer. For both these reasons he has a right to our gratitude. Koreff was fond of good eating, but he preferred bachelor parties, at which men talk with their elbows on the table, at which the conversation is free, and the anecdotes highly spiced.

The friends used to meet in the rotunda of the Palais Royal and there decide at which restaurant to study the day's menu. He was not stupid, and knew how to select the company. Lœve-Veimars, Mérimée, Beyle, the brothers de Musset, Eugène Delacroix, Viollet-le-Duc, Ampère, Arvers, Briffault

(who died mad), and even occasionally, let me say it under my breath, Victor Cousin would be of the number. The wit that sparkled round the board was dazzling.

There were those who would have given a great deal to have heard the conversation in which the evening would be spent. What happened afterwards? Had I the pen of Mathurin Regnier I would try to write an account of it.

As Koreff went into every kind of society he was naturally often used as an intermediary. Sometimes a fashionable lady would wish to gratify her curiosity, or to enliven her salon by the presence of some distinguished writer or artist, and would ask his help. He willingly granted the request, for he was good-natured and liked to be the means of bringing distinguished people forward. Once a woman in society asked Dr. Koreff to bring to her house Alfred de Musset, then radiant with youth and with his first successes, and a subject of interest to all cultivated people. Either intentionally or by mistake Koreff said nothing to de Musset, and introduced Prosper Mérimée instead. It was an opportunity for him, and Mérimée was not one to ignore the favour done him, for he had tact and was a man of the world. He was already famous, his "*Jacquerie*," "*Chronique du Temps de Charles IX.*," his "*Guzla*" which had even made an impression upon Goethe, and his "*Théâtre de Clara Gazul*" displayed those qualities of style which were to prove him a master.

If ever a man possessed the art of writing it was he. It might have been supposed by those who remarked his love of work, his natural aptitude for and devotion to letters, that he had sacrificed everything to them, but this was far from being the case. With a precocious wisdom rare in a young man, he realized the truth that he only who is in a position to be independent of its money rewards can cultivate literature with absolute independence and unflinching devotion.

His father, whose best picture was one of "Innocence feeding a Serpent," had abandoned painting and devoted himself to theoretic experiments in the combination of pigments. He was not likely to make money in that way, and Prosper Mérimée had scarcely any private fortune.

Either he was offered or applied for a post as auditor of accounts to the Conseil d'Etat, for he knew that, though not a career in itself, such a post opens up other paths. He was possessed of tact and courage, and his friend Beyle succeeded in imparting to him much of his own experience. His object was to secure an official position which would leave him free to pursue his literary labours uninterrupted, to be able to sing "*Gaudeat bene nanti*," as in the "*Mariage de Figaro*." Who was to be the magician to open the door which would lead to the fulfilment of his hopes, and perhaps to the production of many *chefs-d'œuvre*?

The magician was that Count d'Argout whose nose proved a source of revenue to caricaturists and journalists during the reign of Louis Philippe. When he was appointed minister he made Mérimée his private secretary, and kept him with him first at the Admiralty, then at the Ministère du Commerce, and finally at the Ministère de l'Intérieur. In this last position Mérimée, acting under orders from the Minister, drew up the famous circular, issued after some disturbance, to compel every physician or surgeon to denounce any wounded person he might be attending to the police. Only one man was found out of the whole number capable of sacrificing his professional duty, and he was dishonoured by the act. When Comte d'Argout left the ministry in 1784, he appointed his former secretary Inspector General of Historical Monuments. The post was fairly remunerative, it enabled him to travel, and left him a good deal of leisure.

Literature, thank Heaven! was the gainer. Indeed, it would have been deplorable had a writer-

of such powers been sacrificed to official life. When Mérimée, in the course of one of his journeys, as inspector, was puzzled to fix the date of a gable or of a turret, he would consult his friend Viollet-le-Duc, who would tell him under his breath and tell him correctly.

Never was literary work more conscientiously performed than was Mérimée's. He aimed at perfection, and often succeeded in attaining it. He was never weary of making corrections, because he respected his thought and was always anxious to improve. His method of production was extremely slow. He would copy and recopy his manuscript, and make alterations as he did so. I remember having heard him say that he had recopied "Colomba" sixteen times. He had one weakness which often surprised me in a writer who was not wanting either in cynicism or in contempt for other men's abilities. Before finally parting with a work to the publisher he would read it aloud in the salon or the boudoir, sought the applause of fashionable idlers or the approval of intimate friendship. He did not even shrink from the labour of copying out his "Nouvelles" upon small-sized paper in his best handwriting, would have them bound by Bauzonnet or by Capé, and offer them to his lady admirers.

Homo Duplex, he was very stiff or very yielding, according to circumstances, and, above all, according to the people he was with.

I was only eighteen when I was first introduced to him, and I was much delighted at such a piece of good fortune. He saw that this was the case, and he at once asked me a question which deserved, and which received, a rough answer. When I met him again, after ten or twelve years, I reminded him of the incident. He laughed heartily, and seemed surprised that I should have retained a disagreeable impression; that impression time has not effaced.

When in society his manners were good, though

a little studied and constrained. He did not speak much, as if afraid to trust himself. As he was easily impressed by great people, and naturally obsequious, he could not show the Empress enough respect before her face, but spoke of her familiarly when out of her hearing thus —

“The last time I saw Eugénie ! ”

He paid no attention to the observations addressed to him upon this subject, and could not understand that people were laughing at his upstart airs. Victor Cousin said —

“Mérimeé is a gentleman.”

It may have been natural that Victor Cousin should have held this opinion, but it was certainly peculiar to himself. Mérimeé had nothing about him which bespoke the man of good family, neither in the manner of expressing himself, nor in his conduct, nor in his tastes. On the contrary, everything about him was premeditated and forced, as if he feared to depart from the line he had laid down for himself. He had learnt his lesson, and was afraid of forgetting it. Occasionally I saw him in the company of the Comte de Morny ; the contrast was striking, the ease of manner of the one made Mérimeé's borrowed graces the more noticeable. He had a fancy for having his clothes made in England, and the ungraceful cut of the thick cloth added to the stiff appearance he thought fit to affect.

Mérimeé was of middle-height, and well-made. The upper part of his face was fine, a broad forehead and magnificent eyes expressed intelligence and lofty aspirations, but his wide nose, sensual mouth, and heavy jaw were suggestive of the gross appetites he sometimes obeyed. When he was at his ease, smoking and talking freely among men after dinner, Mérimeé's cynicism was extraordinary.

I am not prudish, and a coarse anecdote does not shock me. The masters of Rabelaisian humour and of rather highly flavoured comparisons do not scare me, and I have known how to answer them

upon occasion. But Mérimée's fertility of expression, his elaborate details and finished descriptions oppressed me. He never laughed when revelling in obscenity, and wallowed in the mire with perfect equanimity. I have seen Antony Deschamps leave the room to avoid hearing the end of one of his stories. To try and astonish people, if possible, was one of his weaknesses. George Sand's dislike to him, entertained in spite of the indulgent kindness which was the foundation of her character, I always attributed to this cause. One day I asked her some question about Mérimée; she replied —

“Do not speak to me of that man; I loathe his memory.”

He must, however, have had some fine qualities, for he had devoted friends, who followed him through all the vicissitudes of life, and remained faithful.

It may be a commonplace to say that we only love those who are worthy of being loved, but it is certain that the man who has sincere friends deserves to have them, and Mérimée had such friends. During the last years of his life, when the heart complaint from which he suffered had brought on painful attacks of asthma, his doctors recommended him to shoot with a bow and arrows, so as to develop the pectoral muscles and expand the chest. It was a touching sight to see him walking through Cannes accompanied by two English women, who carried his bow and quiver, and followed this aged Apollo like two nymphs of classical times; they had come from London entirely for the sake of watching over him, tending him in illness, and cheering his solitude.

He was very intimate with Farcy, who fell fighting during the days of July, also with Victor Jacquemont, but his correspondence with him was not considered suitable for publication when after his death the traveller's letters were collected. There was something incomplete in his nature; in his confidential letters he has said —



"I do not like relations. The architecture of Venice is without imagination and without taste—I abhor French poetry."

These statements may be believed.\* As a matter of fact certain feelings were wanting in him; there was a kind of dryness in his nature, and he tried, as it were, to defend himself from certain human emotions which he considered vulgar. If, however, he had eaten a snipe roasted to perfection and drunk a glass of port in proper condition he was full of poetry, and ready to shout hallelujahs. With all his cleverness he was so absurd as to try to teach Greek to his lady friends. He would make them a present of Burnouf's grammar, give them a lesson occasionally, ask them questions about the second aorist, or about the verbs in  $\lambda\omega$ ,  $\mu\omega$ ,  $\nu\omega$ ,  $\rho\omega$ . With the pertinacity of a pedant he persisted in these ridiculous attempts—

"Ah! Pour l'amour du grec, souffrez qu'on vous embrasse!"

He had a taste for languages, which he was well able to turn to account, and in certain cases showed discrimination in the choice of his teachers. Extremely obliging, he was sometimes most serviceable to his friends. He introduced Viollet-le-Duc at Compiègne, and engaged in a vigorous campaign on his behalf.

Viollet-le-Duc, who had a great admiration for Napoleon III., and a still greater admiration for the Empress Eugénie, was giving all his thoughts to the arrangement of a little amateur theatre, which had been improvised in a corner of the castle. His skill in designing the costumes and in painting the scenes was highly appreciated. People declared meantime he was the only architect possessed of imagination, and that it must be due to the jealousy of the Institute that he was not a professor engaged

\* Mérimée does not seem to have had the least idea of poetry. Victor Hugo is mad, Baudelaire is mad; only Ponson de Terrail knows what he is about. Was he serious? Or was he laughing at the lady to whom he wrote?—See "*Lettres à une Inconnue*."

in instruction. Who so well-fitted to occupy a chair at the Beaux-Arts as a man who combined the gifts of Vitruvius and of Bramante? For the moment, and until he should be appointed Grand Master of French Architecture, he was allowed to draw money to the extent of several millions of francs, and given the Château de Pierrefonds to restore. Viollet-le-Duc excelled in these kind of restorations. He was a skilful and most scientific draughtsman, and he knew the history of the Gothic period of architecture with absolute accuracy. The restorations of Notre Dame and of the Sainte-Chapelle are remarkably well-executed, but he does not seem to have understood the spirit of classical architecture, nor was he specially successful in the construction of modern buildings. Therefore great astonishment was felt when he was appointed professor at the School of Beaux-Arts. The truth was that Mérimée had used his powerful influence with those who surrounded the Emperor, but the result of his intervention was not happy on this occasion. The students of the Beaux-Arts School were dissatisfied, and sent in a protest, but it was not regarded, and Viollet-le-Duc was publicly installed by the Comte de Nieuwerkerke, the President. The Professor found it impossible to make himself heard amid the outcries which greeted him. He quitted the hall escorted by the President and by some friends, among whom Théophile Gautier had insinuated himself. The students encumbered the passage. Along the Rue Bonaparte, the Quais Malaquet, and upon the Pont des Arts the crowd followed singing.

It is needless to name the opera from which they had borrowed their refrain, and it would be invidious to repeat the puns they perpetrated. The crowd collected in the courtyard of the Museum. Théophile Gautier tried to harangue them, and to bring the students of the Beaux-Arts to reason. The arm of the law is supreme, the police arrested Gautier and conducted him to the station-house,

where he was locked up ; it also dispersed the crowd. By that time the police had discovered their mistake and released the unfortunate Gautier, who was beginning to remember the story of Lesturques. After this scandal Viollet-le-Duc did not attempt to lecture to the students, who had refused to hear him. But probably he felt the need of an audience, for after the fall of the Empire he was elected Conseiller Municipal.

Mérimée had been carried away by friendship, and twice before he had fallen into similar errors.

Except when misled by this lofty sentiment his discretion was generally to be trusted.

The Comte de Montrond had just died. Many anecdotes might have been told of him if the French language were like the Latin and could outrage the proprieties. A lady who had known him said in Mérimée's hearing —

“What a pity that so many witty sayings should be lost ! The talk of clever people should always be preserved !”

Mérimée replied —

“You are right, and I will write Beyle's funeral oration.”

He produced the little pamphlet entitled *H. B.*, of which only twenty-one copies were circulated, and the names he left blank filled in afterwards by hand. Eugène Pelletan had access to a copy Mérimée had given to an old writer, whose son, lately deceased, was a distinguished critic. Pelletan wrote a severe but just review of the pamphlet, for, in truth, it was a tolerably foul production. The same copy was surreptitiously passed from hand to hand and recopied. It was taken up by a printer called Poulet-Malassis, who had become bankrupt and had taken refuge in Belgium. He reprinted it in a tolerably large edition. Mérimée was annoyed ; he had seriously thought to do honour to the memory of the author of the “*Chartreuse de Parme*,” by repeating a number of observations and anecdotes, which might be condoned in conversation, but were unpar-

donable in print. When he undertook the defence of his friend Libri, condemned for the theft of rare books and manuscripts in the public libraries, he presented the public with a pendant to "l'Eloge de Beyle." This time things turned out ill, and he did not escape with only a severe critique upon his conduct. He was condemned for contempt of court, and had to spend a fortnight at the Conciergerie, rather a severe punishment.

Mérimée, so prudent usually, who felt his way step by step, and prided himself upon his shrewdness, was duped like a simpleton in a case which affected his vanity. The publication of his "Lettres à une Inconnue" was a speculation I cannot qualify too severely, but it was due to the want of discretion to which I have referred.

After having lived with the utmost reserve, secluded himself from view, and drawn a veil over his inner life, it was a hard fate, which I do not think Mérimée had deserved, to be offered up a naked sacrifice to the public, to be sold for a bag of money. When I read those letters, which never ought to have been removed from his secret drawer, I thought of Proudhon's useless protest. "On your honour, burn all my letters, or I shall write to you no more. Do not run the risk of betraying these confidential outpourings. It is one of my consolations to think that I leave no papers behind me."\*

Who has the right to publish a correspondence in book form? He who received the letters or the heirs of him who wrote them? Surely no court of law would hesitate to pronounce that the moment the subject of their wholesale publication is mooted the correspondence belongs to the executors or to the natural heirs.

It would not be difficult to name the unknown lady or to give here the English *nom de plume* she adopted when she began to produce this correspond-

\* Proudhon's letter to Pilhes, 25th July, 1858. Proudhon's correspondence is contained in fourteen volumes.

ence. The first of the letters she had confided to a schoolboy, who threw it into the post-box on arriving in Paris. I mean to act with more discretion, so I shall not give the details of certain episodes alluded to or ignored in the two well-known volumes, which might have been more complete than they are. Nevertheless, I may remark that it would have been seemingly had sundry passages been suppressed which referred to men who were Mérimée's colleagues or companions. That would have shown, at least, knowledge of the world.

The success of the first issue encouraged others to turn over their correspondence. "Une Autre Inconnue" collected and brought out a few more letters, but these contained but little of interest, and were not much read.

The "Lettres à Panizzi" are an important collection, and were carefully edited by respectful hands. The reader can see for himself that much has been suppressed, and what is left is of historical interest.

Mérimée reveals a side of his nature unsuspected before, because he was at the greatest pains to conceal it. Instead of the sceptic and the cynic we seemed to know, the fast man who affected a cavalier tone with women, which perhaps was half the secret of his *bonnes fortunes*, we find him possessed of a warmth of heart and a power of self-sacrifice in the intimacy of friendship a superficial acquaintance would never have suspected. When the mask is removed we can be attracted by the expression of the man's countenance.

It cannot be denied that he was a courtier. At the Tuileries they nicknamed him the fool of the Empress Eugénie, but he was also a friend in misfortune; when evil days dawned he did not depart.

Sometimes he knows how to point a moral, holds to his own opinion, and gives advice which might have been followed to advantage.

France he loved with passion, and if he was devoted to the sovereign who had received him and treated him with familiar kindness, he was not

blinded, but saw the indiscretions and the mistakes he committed. His remarks before the event are often quite prophetic. Long before the collapse of the Empire he felt the soil tremble beneath him, and was conscious of those mysterious sensations of dread which precede the cataclysm.

When he wrote these letters he was old, life had borne its fruit, and he had drunk the bitter but strengthening draught of experience. It seemed to him that, like the traveller among mountain ranges, nations need a guide to conduct them safely. He who had been an uncompromising Liberal under the Restoration, he who had fought in the July Revolution, now ceased to believe in liberty, and began to ask himself whether races who pass from one political convulsion to another are not on their way to extinction.

Mérimée was at Cannes when war was first declared. As soon as the news of our first defeats reached him he mastered his weakness, hastened to Paris, appeared in the Senate and beside the Empress. Bowed down by illness and by the shock of our disasters, like a good sentinel he remained at the post of duty.

The Revolution of the 4th of September released him, and he wrote, "Everything has happened which the gloomiest imagination could have conceived—our ruin is complete!" \*

The blow was too severe, and he could not long survive it. He returned to Cannes in a hopeless state, sought in vain for a gleam of light in the midst of gloom, and exclaimed, "*Finis Galliæ!*"

His two English friends never left him. One of them, Miss Lagden, wrote on the 24th September —

"He died last night without a struggle. There is no doubt that these terrible political events shortened his days."

It was well that he died and did not live to see the Commune, which he had foreseen. On the 20th August, 1870, he wrote —

\* "*Lettres à Panizzi*," 4th Sept., 1870.

“All the blood which has flowed, and must still flow, will only serve the ends of organized disorder.”

The house he had lived in at Paris, in the Rue de Lille, and which contained all the memorials of his life, was burnt at the same time as the Palais de la Légion d'Honneur, La Cour des Comptes, and Le Conseil d'Etat. It is hardly credible, but it is true, nevertheless, that people who are well-known wrote and repeated how the Empress Eugénie had caused the Rue de Lille to be set on fire because she had confided some secret papers to Mérimée, and was anxious that they should be destroyed. The defeat of the French cause killed Mérimée, who had abandoned hope and lost all belief in the future. Had he remembered a saying of Edgar Quinet's, he might have taken heart once more—

“When iniquity has flooded the earth, if justice can take refuge even under the shade cast by a blade of grass, it will increase and spread until the perfume of its presence has filled the world.”

## CHAPTER X.

### “LUI ET ELLE.”

ONLY twice in my life did I see Alfred de Musset. He was, of all the celebrities with whom I was contemporary, the one I should most have wished to have known; chance did not bring us into any close relationship, and I can only remember meeting him on those two occasions. The first time I saw him was at a party given in his honour in a house where the official world was in the habit of meeting writers and artists. If I remember rightly, Alfred de Musset was under the patronage of Hippolyte Fortoul, then Minister of Public Instruction.

At this party there was to be a kind of entertainment. Musset was to read the “*Songe d’Auguste*,” while Gounod, seated at the piano, had agreed to play a symphony which had been arranged to accompany the poet’s verses.

It was rather a melancholy performance; the poetry had been written to order, and the murmurs of applause were of the descriptions well-bred people never omit. We had been told that the verses were by Alfred de Musset, but they might as well have been from the pen of Ponsard, we should not have known the difference.

He accepted the compliments he received with an air of constraint; one felt that he was not at his ease and that the company did not suit him. Some of his colleagues of the French Academy were present, but there were too many other important people whom he did not know. His weak voice and indifferent elocution contrasted painfully with



Gounod's vigorous accompaniment. In short, the applause was for the poet, but the appreciation for the composer.

Musset seemed conscious of the fact; he was distant and rather silent until the party, which was prolonged after the reading, was over.

Writing to Mdme. Jaubert he speaks of his "stiff bearing, morose, unpleasing, and rude manners."

Certainly that evening the above description would have applied to him.

I next saw him in a house at which I was paying an after-dinner call. A great fire was burning on the drawing-room hearth, a chandelier full of wax candles, and lamps placed about the room gave a brilliant light. Some young married ladies were listening with amusement to a discussion between Charles de Rémusat and Victor Cousin.

Alfred de Musset entered and seated himself near the hearth with the bored air of a man performing a disagreeable task. He looked at the ladies as if he were making comparisons between them. I was able to observe him at my ease. He was forty-four years of age; nothing was left of his early good-looks except his abundant fair hair, which gave out golden reflections in the bright light. His face had grown thin and long, and prematurely wrinkled, the forehead was fine, but the lower lip weak and drooping, so that the general expression was one of impotence. Now and then his beautiful hand with its well-trimmed nails strayed to his hair and composed a stray lock. His dress was somewhat antiquated, and his way of arranging it suggested already the idea of an old dandy. I watched him with the greatest interest, and I asked myself if genius may not be a power independent of a man's nature, external to him, something of which he is unconscious, and for which he is in no way accountable. Scarcely did he exchange a few insignificant words with the lady of the house, a few of the ordinary questions and replies.

At the end of half-an-hour he suddenly got up

from his chair, remained standing for a moment, and then walked across the room upon the heels of his boots with a regular step, his head held straight before him, his eyes fixed, and his body stiff and erect.

A lady who had watched his retreating figure carefully in the mirror said, “Poor fellow;” when he had gone out Victor Cousin turned an unkind joke at his expense, which he might well have omitted; but Cousin was neither a good friend nor a good Christian, and when a spiteful thought occurred to him he was always willing to communicate it to others. There could be no doubt as to Musset’s condition, and when he left the room everybody pretended not to observe him —

“Dans ce verre où je cherche à noyer mon supplice,  
Laissez tomber plutôt quelque pleur de pitié.”

It is difficult to speak of Alfred de Musset. I do not know why he has been called the poet of youth, for the key-note of his poetry is a lament, and the cry his sufferings drew from him resounds in all his songs. He had something more than talent; he had genius, and his genius was cradled in suffering.

Those other poems of youth, “L’Andalouse” and “Don Paez,” what are they compared with the “Nuits,” the “Souvenir” and the “Lettre à Lamartine,” which called forth the silliest of replies? Are not his sorrows worth more than his laughter, his irony, and his bravado? He was morbid, no doubt, and ill; “you were bound to be a poet, and in spite of yourself you are one. God has condemned certain men of genius to wander amid the storm and to create in suffering,” as George Sand wrote to him.

The irresistible passion which carried him along, the cry of pain that escaped from his lips, the varied experiences in which he sought the satisfaction of desires, the more violent because vague and confused, were a part of his ill-balanced character. Then if the satisfaction of his impulses

was impossible he craved forgetfulness, was incapable of enjoying the good possessed, but in despair, when it was lost to him, passed through violent scenes of separation and equally violent scenes of reconciliation, and mingled reproaches, recriminations and accusations of injustice, all of which proved a want of self-mastery and a nature unable to resist its own impulses.

Moreau de Tours calls genius a nervous disease, and before his time Swift had said, "Genius is a disease of the brain." Chateaubriand, Byron, and Alfred de Musset would not have been so great had they not passed through periods of cerebral excitement, which were almost a martyrdom. The centre of pain was within, but every blow from without thrilled through them and touched those sensitive chords. The melody they gave forth was the voice of their complaint, and in its abstract despair that melody will re-echo eternally among men. Their journey through life was a troubled one; they stumbled at every turning and struck their foot against the stones. Let them rest in peace! The sigh they breathed will linger on, for the tomb of great poets is in the heart of humanity.

To form a just estimate of Alfred de Musset, to explain his existence, made up half of work and half of the pleasures which occasionally degenerated into excess, he should be studied in his early years, when he was as handsome as Beaumarchais' Cherubin, and brilliant with the light of dawning genius. But in that case the infatuation to which he yielded, the influences he submitted to, and certain mysteries which are best ignored would have to be disclosed. If he loved an impure moral atmosphere it must be remembered that he was forced to breathe it early. He knew this, and it wrung a bitter lament from his lips. In 1832, at the age of twenty-two, before he had met with the influence which was to affect so powerfully his life and his genius, he published the "*Spectacle dans un fauteuil*." Who does not know "*La Coupe et*

les Lèvres," and remember the denunciation uttered by Frank?

"Ah! Malheur a celui qui laisse la débauche  
Planter le premier clou sous sa mamelle gauche;  
Le cœur d'un homme vierge est un vase profond;  
Lorsque la première eau qu'on y verse est impure,  
La mer y passerait sans laver la souillure,  
Car l'abîme est immense et la tache est au fond."

Those lines are an outburst of regret; the cup he had first raised to his lips contained troubled water. A Monna Belcolor had said to him, as to the Tyrolese mountaineer, "Mount your horse and sup with me to-night."

I knew that woman in her old age. She was still handsome, proud of her title and her establishment; fair and graceful, in spite of her increased size, she was fond of gazing at the small hands she was in love with; this dethroned goddess was like some shameless Cybele. Laughter expanded her red lips, and her bold glance made a man shrink when she looked at him —

"Avec ses deux grands yeux qui sont d'un noir d'enfer."

Gustave Flaubert, who saw her once, would never see her again; she frightened him.

Alfred de Musset was poor. Attracted by worldly pleasures, which involve *rich* people in extravagant expenditure such as they can afford to meet, he tried to win at play the money his writings could not supply.

The Duc d'Orleans, who had been a comrade of his at the Collège Henri IV., tried to obtain the King's favour for him, but Louis Philippe was scandalized by the familiarity of a poet who addressed him in the second person singular. Louis XIV. was less susceptible.

"Grand roi, cesse de vaincre ou je cesse d'écrire."

François Buloz, who had been offered the post of librarian to the Minister of the Interior, was able, after some difficulty, to transfer the appointment to

Alfred de Musset. His "Ballade à la Lune" had given offence to some of the heads of departments.

After the Revolution of 1848 Ledru-Rollin, who knew as much about literature as a fish, turned him out of doors.

Lamartine, who was really at the head of affairs, permitted this act of imbecility, and had not even the decency to utter a protest. Alfred de Musset had to await the advent of the Empire with the appointment at the head of affairs of Hippolyte Fortoul, who, without being solicited, gave him the post of librarian at the Ministry of Public Instruction. This was a sinecure, and it relieved him to some extent from his pecuniary embarrassments.

Men of this generation who have by heart the poems of Alfred de Musset, and are in the habit of quoting and reciting them, will scarcely believe that he was unknown in my own youth. When I say unknown I must explain myself. He was famous in the society of young writers and artists, and in the salons of a certain number of ladies, but it was a reputation confined to select circles, and did not extend beyond them. He who will be the great poet of our age—for his voice was the most human voice in song, though others made more noise—had not then broken down the barriers of indifference which divide an author from public recognition and renown. A chance brought him forward and revealed him to the world with the poet's aureola about his brows.

Madame Allan, a refined and gifted actress, had been engaged to act at the Comédie Française. She had just come from St. Petersburg, where, unknown to French people, she had often played in "Le Caprice." It happened fortunately that François Buloz, the editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, was the Royal Commissioner at the Comédie Française. He had been one of the first to recognize the genius of Alfred de Musset. His poems and proverbs were published by him, and he professed unbounded admiration for their author. So "Le Caprice" was

rehearsed, notwithstanding the circumstance that Samson, a mouthing actor of the day, did not think De Musset's prose sufficiently correct, and was greatly scandalized.

The first representation took place on the 27th November, 1847, and the piece was a revelation as well as a success. This little one-act play for two characters charmed the audience by the perfection of its style. Henceforth it was acknowledged that Alfred de Musset was a poet, not merely “a writer of songs intended to be set to music.” That which the “Contes d’Espagne et d’Italie,” the “Spectacle dans un fauteuil,” “Rolla,” and other *chefs d’œuvre* could not do was done for him in a single evening by this agreeable trifle, and in one week his reputation was established. I am aware that “everything comes to those who know how to wait,” but it was not just to make Alfred de Musset wait so long.

From that date until now his books have been read by all, and his poetry has found its way into every heart.

Not to speak of his famous liaison with George Sand would be only false delicacy on my part. Never did fate bring together two beings more dissimilar or apparently more incongruous. It seemed as if they could not but repel one another, yet they were attracted probably by the very force of contrast. These two prisoners of love, rivetted to the same chain, had in common neither their tastes nor their intellectual proclivities, neither their habits of study nor their sentiments—only the bond of sense could have united them. The connection could not have lasted, for it was an anomaly; the part of each was reversed. George Sand, then thirty years of age, was the man in the partnership, and de Musset, who was only twenty-three, was the woman, and such a woman! One all nerves, capricious, self-willed, a prey to every fancy, abusing everything, and, above all, the patience of others. He rebelled against the half maternal

authority George Sand exercised over him, tried to escape from her influence, committed a hundred follies as if to defy her, and then returned worn out and demoralized to crave protection from the woman he denounced and adored by turns. He said of himself —

“I am not tender by nature, I am too extreme.”

Another quotation expresses their dissimilarity. Musset writes —

“I have worked all day. In the evening I wrote ten lines, and drank a whole bottle of brandy. She has drunk two litres of milk and written half a volume.”

George Sand was a calm, laborious writer, who set herself a task and accomplished it. Musset waited for the muse to visit him, sought her, sometimes in vain, at the bottom of his glass, lost patience, and rushed off in search of an adventure.

George Sand had the serenity of those ruminants whose peaceful eyes seem to reflect immensity. Musset was like a bird beating its wings, and ever ready to take flight again.

Their only point of contact was the insatiable curiosity which devoured them both. If de Musset had fallen in love with some touzled chignon and pursued it breathlessly through the streets, George Sand was probably attracted about the same time by a black-bearded professor, who expounded palin-genesiac theories in hollow tones.\*

Each was full of fancies, but neither could make much allowance for the other. Such a union was of brittle material, and quickly broken. The circumstances of the first rupture were abominable.

George Sand did Alfred de Musset a grievous wrong, which not even his own failings could excuse.\*

They parted, and seemed to breathe more freely, as if released from torture. Then they began to miss the torture, rushed together, parted again, and

\* See “Lui et Elle,” by Paul de Musset, p. 134 and following.

after another period of separation once more renewed intimacy. They exhausted every form of violence, of pain, and delirium.

One day their state of excitement was such that George Sand was suspected of having swallowed the contents of a bottle of laudanum. De Musset held her down and forced her to drink a whole jug of water. An eye-witness of this scene told me the story, not without signs of emotion, more than twenty years afterwards.

When on the 1st May, 1857, Alfred de Musset, whose powers of production were quite exhausted, died at the age of forty-six, his brother Paul hurried off to visit George Sand, at Nohant, and asked her either to destroy the letters she had in her possession or to hand them over to him. This correspondence, which in some respects is a justification, George Sand allowed a lady friend of hers to read. The friend copied out only five of the letters. I have read the copy, and it could certainly be published without impropriety. One of the letters contains the following stanzas :—

“ Te voilà revenu dans mes nuits étoilées  
Bel ange aux yeux d'azur, aux paupières voilées  
Amour, mon bien suprême et que j'avais perdu !  
J'ai cru pendant trois ans te vaincre et te maudire,  
Et toi, les yeux en pleurs, avec ton doux sourire,  
Au chevet de mon lit te voilà revenu.

“ Eh bien ! Deux mots de toi m'ont fait le roi du monde,  
Mets ta main sur mon cœur, sa blessure est profonde,  
Elargis-la, bel ange, et qu'il en soit brisé ;  
Jamais amant aimé mourant pour sa maîtresse  
N'a dans des yeux plus noirs bu la céleste ivresse  
Nul sur un plus beau front ne t'a jamais baisé.”\*

George Sand was an honourable woman. She preserved the most absolute silence with respect to all matters connected with her “ liaisons,” and in the case of Alfred de Musset, for whom she retained an affectionate feeling, she would not have failed to exercise her customary discretion. In her letters

\* These stanzas are inscribed “ Fait au bain,” 2nd August.



to him she calls him "My poor boy," and he addressed her thus, "Oh, my great George!"

These two expressions are very characteristic of their relation to one another, and I find them in the letters I have just alluded to, which were written after the dreadful separation at Venice.

" *La mon pauvre cœur est resté ;  
S'il doit m'en être rapporté,  
Dieu le conduise.*"

In the first of her "Lettres à un Voyageur," George Sand has painted her own portrait in these two lines, "A haughty, gloomy, and irritable soul allied to an indolent, taciturn, and calm nature."

This was the secret of her apparently sudden impulses, which were really premeditated, and the result of the conquest the spirit had gained over her natural character.

I was acquainted with her, but when I first saw her she was nearly sixty years of age. Before being introduced into her presence it was necessary to have the proper shibboleth, and to curry favour with the right people. She inhabited a small apartment in the Rue Racine, and the door of her salon was guarded by a rather unpleasant-looking man, with a haggard countenance, restless eyes, and hands of doubtful cleanliness. He was an engraver, out at elbows, whom she took about with her, and who seemed to surround her with a sort of restless care. Between her fingers she rolled a cigarette, which she offered me; she spoke very little, and as she perceived that her silence surprised me, she observed —

"I do not talk because I am stupid."

This was rather too much to believe; she was only shy, and like many people who write a great deal, she found a charm in silence. In her simple puce-coloured dress, made of cheap silk, and her laced walking boots, she was more like a little *bourgeoise* with a talent for housekeeping than like any idea one might have formed of "Lélia."

If the profound expression of her eyes had not suggested something of her former beauty she would have been ugly with her pallid skin, her hollow cheeks, and long teeth, the face surmounted by a black wig, skilfully arranged, and overhanging her brows.

I tried to discover some traces of the portrait Champmartin made of her, and the refinement of Delacroix's sketch, which represents her dressed like a man, and with her face on one side, the fault of the painter, and not a defect in his model. There was nothing left of her former beauty; everything had disappeared at the first breath of old age. “The poor boy” would not have recognized his “great George.”

There was about her a certain apathy as if she were sunk in impenetrable placidity, and emotions could no longer affect her. I think there was always a strange inconsistency in her personality. Outwardly calm, her gestures were slow, her glance was gentle, and her voice rather low; she appeared a placid, restful, and rather stolid person of imperturbable serenity upon the surface. In reality she was subject to ill-regulated outbursts of feeling, to the influence of strange ideas, abhorred the conventional, longed for the unknown, rebelled against custom and law, against the material inequality of the sexes, and as she was unscrupulous, gave free rein to her fancies. She has doubtless often been misjudged, and yet she showed herself superior to nearly all the men who influenced her. The history of her life can be traced in her novels; the transformations of feeling she passed through were many, and each of them was inspired by some fresh influence. Every new religion she adopted had a god of its own; her Olympus was crowded, and the deities who filled it were such poor idols that with one or two exceptions they are nameless. Their shades returned into nothingness, a region they should never have emerged from.

I dined with her once in 1868 alone; she was

then sixty-four years of age. Her object was to question me about a subject which interested her, and we spent the evening in the salon of a restaurant, where she usually took her meals when in Paris.

She was very talkative, and more than once disposed to confide in me more fully than I desired, for my attitude towards her was respectful, as is fitting in the presence of one of the masters. In the course of conversation she said —

“My one ambition is to possess an income of 5,000 French livres.”

I started and exclaimed —

“What! you, George Sand, you have not that!”

To which she replied —

“No! I have earned a great deal, and I have spent it. Had I earned a great deal more I should have spent all that in the same way.”

Then a masterful smile passed over her face which seemed to express pride in her own influence and acknowledged supremacy, and a kind of contempt the cause of which it was easy to divine. She added, “I regret nothing.” It was only a passing flash, but I understood that under certain circumstances the “good bourgeoisie” might be dangerous.

Her moral ideas were opposed to her literary ideas. The bitter diatribes against marriage, and even against the family, her novels contain will be remembered. Among the letters she wrote me I find one in which the following passage occurs. The date of the letter is the 21st June, 1868:—

“In the story of those two lovers there is much of what we have all experienced, we, who belong to that period. Those were times when the heart had exhausted itself with living too fast. Now they have invented the plan of suppressing it altogether in anticipation of the entrance of some unknown element into human life. Marry! I declare to you that marriage is the haven. You were given that advice too early. I do not give it you too late.

One is only as old as one looks. Marry with a feeling of friendship, only for the sake of having children. Love is seldom prolific. When you see before you a being you can love better than yourself you will be happy.

“ Better than himself a man loves, not his wife, but his child, the innocent creature, the type of divinity which is lost gradually as it grows older, but which during some years brings us back to the possession of an ideal upon the earth.

“ Where are you in this lovely weather ? Surely in your dear Black Forest ! I have nothing to tell you about myself, no sorrow, no misfortune to record. It sounds unreal and rather stupid to say that one has attained the height of his aspirations. Yet it is like that, but it sounds so improbable that no one but myself can believe in it. Pardon the optimism of old age, it is a kind of childishness. Farewell, and still keep a little of your friendship for me.”

She wrote this letter in perfect good faith, although she wrote “ *Lélia* ” in perfect good faith also, for she was always thoroughly genuine. The impression of the moment carried her away ; she did evil with the wish to do right, and preached all the virtues, but she was not hypocritical, as has been said of her. Her nature was a variable one, and at each of life’s halting-places she imagined she had found lasting repose.

When the crowd, fired by Peter the Hermit, started for the Holy Land, the little children asked at each town they approached, “ Is that Jerusalem ? ”

So it was with George Sand ; upon the crusade of her own life she mistook each humble spire for the Holy Sepulchre, for the place where lay her God. She visited many shrines, but did not find Him.

“ To conform,” says the Spaniards. “ To ameliorate oneself,” says Goethe. He who in the course of his life has learnt to apply those two precepts can advance in a straight line. For want of

their guidance George Sand's path was a tortuous one over more than one pitfall. Many others would have perished on the way; she was saved by her love of work.

No day-labourer ever toiled more strenuously, and if only on that account she is to be respected. She was a man of letters who shrank from no fatigue. Every evening when the accounts were made up, the stockings mended, and she had given her orders for the next day, George Sand would take her pen and write a given number of pages in her big handwriting.

In her hours of production she seemed possessed by forces of which she was scarcely conscious. Another and inspiring presence was, as it were, at her side, a presence which departed when the task was finished. She said to me, "When I begin a novel I have no plot in my head. Everything takes shape of itself while I scribble, and quite according to chance." I believed in the truth of this avowal, which proves the astonishing fertility of her genius.

When Alfred de Musset died George Sand, who knew that she was accused of having murdered his genius and martyred his heart, thought it was now time to make her protest and to relate this drama for two characters in which she had played the principal part. De Musset had not spared her;

"Honte à toi qui la première  
M'as appris la trahison,  
Et de honte et de colère .  
M'as fait perdre la raison !"

Under the title of "Elle et Lui" she wrote the story of her *liaison* with de Musset.

François Buloz assured me that he had kept the manuscript for nearly a year without being able to make up his mind to publish it. The interest excited in the public mind by this pathological study, when it appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, was intense. It was acknowledged that de Musset had been entirely in the wrong, but that

George Sand had forgotten certain episodes which were known to others in all their details.

Paul de Musset replied, and tried to prove that the fault was all on the side of George Sand in his “ Lui et Elle.”

Neither had told the truth unreservedly.

By a careful revision of the two volumes, and by filling in that which has been omitted in each, we should obtain a correct description of the passion these two unhappy beings entertained for one another. In the book written by George Sand there is, however, one scene which is reproduced with absolute fidelity. One evening they wandered together into the forest of Fontainebleau. De Musset wished to pass the night there; he fell into a state of rapture, which changed to delirium, accompanied by visions, cries of despair, frantic songs, ecstatic happiness, and nervous terror. In a period of five or six hours he passed through every phase of madness. When under the momentary influence of ineffable felicity he wished to mark the spot his frenzied imagination had transformed into a paradise, and buried a five-franc piece beneath a rock. Eight years later he went for a ride in the same forest, accompanied by his friend Tattet and two or three others, and made for the place where that tragic and yet blissful night had been spent.

In spite of his friends' objections he dismounted, examined the spot, found the rock, turned over the soil, and came upon the coin, which had become green with time. He raised it to his lips and wept. His feelings were deeply moved, and the outcome of his emotions exist and will endure in the “ Souvenir,” one of the poet's most inspired productions —

“ O puissance du temps ! O légères années !  
 Vous emportez nos cœurs, nos cris et nos regrets !  
 Mais la pitié vous prend, et sur nos fleurs fanées  
 Vous ne marchez jamais !”

It is true that all are free to write their personal history, but I think that George Sand and Paul de

Musset would have been wiser had they kept silence. The story of their adventures is not particularly edifying, and, although it has a human interest, should not have been revealed. Neither "Fantasio" nor "Lélia" has been advanced in public estimation by these revelations, vulgarized by descriptions of the lovers' various meeting-places. It may be admitted, however, that George Sand, in defending herself, and Paul de Musset, in defending his brother, were within their rights and pleaded *pro domo sua*. But what can be said for Louise Colet, who interfered, forced a passage for herself, thrust herself between the author of "Rolla" and the author of "Consuelo," and exclaimed in triumphant tones, "Here I am?"

Louise Colet thought it absolutely necessary the world should be made aware that Alfred de Musset had had a fancy for a woman writer of no ability like herself.

After the publication of "Elle et Lui" and of "Lui et Elle," Louise Colet published "Lui." Alfred de Musset was the "Lui," whose addresses she had rejected in order that she might remain faithful to an adored Léonce. Léonce was Gustave Flaubert.

How well I know the story!—even to the point of nausea. I possess more than three hundred letters written to me by Louise Colet, who had made me the confidant of her affection for Gustave Flaubert. She persecuted him against his will.

Her book "Lui" is worse than a lying invention; it is a systematic perversion of the truth. The mask she uses is so transparent that her characters can be recognized. In her disingenuous pages she exposes all those with whom she had any sort of acquaintance, and who had not taken care to defend themselves from her attacks. There is one fact I think fit to reproduce here, because she gave a garbled version of it.

A person of note in his own day, whom she calls Duchemin, and whose real name I will not mention,

fell in love with her and made her a declaration. She revels in the details of this incident; I give the description in her own words, borrowed from "Lui:"—"After speaking thus, the old fool threw himself at my feet, seized the flowing folds of my dress between his knees as in a vice, and took a greasy pocket-book out of the inner pocket of his coat, from which he extracted several bank-notes. 'Let me treat you as a friend,' he exclaimed, 'and spare a little love to him who nourishes such a passion for you.' He reminded one of some absurd Tartufe. For one moment my sense of the ridiculous would, I thought, overpower my contempt, but indignation finally predominated. With the back of my left hand I struck the pocket-book, which fell down near the fireplace, and, with the other hand, I gave the old pedant, who knelt trembling before me, a push so that he fell backwards on the carpet. His first thought was not to pick himself up, but to stretch out his bony hand towards the gaping pocket-book, which was in contact with the hot coals and might have caught fire. I confess I should have been delighted had I seen his insolent bank-notes in flames. I have invented no single detail of this scene."\*

Certainly she invents nothing, but she forgets to say that two of her friends were hidden by her wish behind a glass door hung with curtains, and, though invisible, were able to observe the whole performance. Possibly their presence may have had some influence in dictating her haughty rejection of the bank-notes, which amounted in all to a sum of five hundred francs. One of these witnesses told me the story, and appeared rather ashamed of the part he had played in it.

Louise Colet allows her hatred and envy of George Sand to appear on every page of this book. She describes herself as a marquise descended from a race of heroes who had been ruined by an unjust



lawsuit and reduced to avail herself of the poetic gifts Nature had so freely bestowed upon her. So instinctive is her talent that, when out for a walk with Alfred de Musset, he and she would disport themselves upon the slopes of Helicon and talk in blank verse.

The facts were somewhat different. She was born at Aix in 1815, and pretended that her father was professor of drawing at the Lyons School. She prided herself on this circumstance, and, until the name was compromised in a very unliterary adventure, always signed herself Louise Colet née Revoil. The truth was that she was born at Aix on the 17th September, 1810, and was the daughter of the Postmaster, Antoine Revoil. Pierre Revoil, the painter, who acquired some fame, was only her cousin. Her husband, whom she always slandered, and of whom she wrote most unjustly in "Lui," was an excellent man. He was one of the professors of the conservatoire, was passionately devoted to music, gentle, and possessed of inexhaustible patience.

Some people only care to be talked of in a certain way; others care not, so long as they are talked about, what is said of them; some love fame, and others notoriety. Louise Colet belonged to the latter category; knew how to advertise herself cleverly; and shrank from nothing which could attract attention to herself.

She had her portrait placed in the Belles Femmes de Paris, between those of a singer and of a milliner. Her face was pretty, but she was rather stout, and her delicate features contrasted strangely with her masculine bearing. Clumsy feet and hands and a rough voice betrayed a natural vulgarity, which was still more apparent in her writings. The opinion she entertained of her own beauty tended to diminish her charm; she admired herself too much.

"Do you know that they have found the arms of the Venus of Milo?" she would say, with lowered eyes and with pursed-up lips.

"Where?"

"In the sleeves of my dress," she would reply.

Louis Bouilhet used to say, "She lacks by nature that which is natural."

The story of her connection with Gustave Flaubert she related in prose and verse, and she abused and calumniated him with her pen, as might have been expected. I cannot understand how it was that Flaubert, by instinct a cultured, a solitary toiler, and a man of pure moral conduct, should not have been repelled by this literary amazon. They first met at Pradier's studio, in the month of August, 1846, while I was gone to Vichy. Pradier, in perfect good faith, had said to Louise Colet, "Do you see that tall, fair young fellow? He wants to write; you ought to give him advice."

Those who knew Flaubert can imagine how dutifully he would listen to the lecture. Such a pupil, handsome, tall, and manly, was far from being unacceptable to the lady we were in the habit of calling the Muse. She would address Pradier as "My dear Pheidias," and he replied, "My dear Sappho;" quite seriously they adopted these high-flown titles in their intercourse with one another. Flaubert laughed at them, but Sappho was cunning, and "the tall fellow who wanted to write" was not strong enough to defend himself. His resolution failed him, and he had to suffer for it. He had regarded the matter in the light of a passing freak, one of those pleasant and rather vulgar experiences which have no influence upon the future because they have no justification in sentiment. Paris and Croisset were far enough apart. He imagined that he would be left in peace, but he was mistaken.

Louise Colet persecuted Flaubert. She had no respect for work, was imperious and exacting, and avowed that she was so. He had a kind of fear of her, and when he visited Paris hid himself from her and drew down the blinds of his carriage. Sometimes he laughed, but more often felt annoyed. She

would watch for him, follow him, and wait at the doors of houses at which he was calling.

One evening she forced her way into a private room at the Frères Provençaux in a state of fury, prepared to slay her rival. She was greeted by a burst of laughter. Louis de Cormenin, Bouilhet, Flaubert, and I were dining together. We had escaped from the public room so as to be able to talk more freely. On another occasion Flaubert was leaving Paris for Rouen when she entered the waiting-room of the station and went through such tragic scenes that the railway officials were obliged to interfere. Flaubert was distressed and begged for mercy, but she gave him no quarter.

A small note-book full of verses, written in her small, illegible, ill-formed, and flourishing handwriting, must have been found among his papers. This was a poem descriptive of a twenty-four hours' visit to Nantes she and Flaubert had paid. It was written in a tempestuous style; in it she compared Flaubert to "a wild buffalo of the American prairie," and compares herself to La Vallière and Fontanges.

Flaubert smiled at this extravagant poetry. Its transparent imagery revealed what it should have concealed, but in the main he was flattered.

Nevertheless he was afraid of being laughed at, and never ventured to show this epithalamium to Louis Bouilhet.

There are some women who become good when they grow old, like medlars, but that could not be said of Louise Colet. She never failed to utter a calumny. "Madame Bovary" appeared, and fully demonstrated the genius of Flaubert, the writer to whom Pradier had recommended her to give advice. She was exasperated, and published a sonnet to prove that the style of the book was worthy of a commercial traveller, called Flaubert, a half-fledged Norman, and asserted that his fame was due to the puffs he had himself instigated all the newspapers to write. No one ought to have known better than

she that articles written by friends to oblige, will not establish a reputation on a secure basis or confer talent on a person who is devoid of it. Her resentment overstepped all boundaries, and in her novel “Lui” she slyly reproached Léonce (that is to say Flaubert) with having failed to send her ten thousand francs for an album of poetry, the pages of which I have turned over, and which may have been worth fifty crown pieces. She was often in want of money, for her works were not much in request, her means were not large, her husband had died in 1851, and her income had been reduced by another cause. A certain philosopher, who was then Minister of Public Instruction, thought fit to allow her a pension of 2,400 francs, but in consequence of an incident which has no bearing upon literature this pension was reduced to an annual sum of 1,500 French livres.

I do not know how she succeeded in obtaining possession of Benjamin Constant’s letters to Juliette Récamier. They were written in a passionate style, and Louise Colet showed them to anyone who cared to see them, and had even begun to print them in the *feuilleton* of a newspaper when the legitimate heirs sent an usher of the Court to stop their publication.

Prose was not remunerative, and poetry still less so. In her best manner she began to produce articles on the fashions, recommended dress, corset, shoe and glove-makers, celebrated the virtues of cold cream, sounded the praises of different preparations for the toilet, and sang in verse the soft bloom of the nitrate of bismuth, which is disguised under the name of violet powder.

The time was far from having arrived when an enthusiastic *dilettante* was to print a large quarto edition of her works, consisting of twenty-five copies. It was cruel to be reduced to writing about ruffs and farthingales and hygienic garters after the letters she had received from Victor Hugo, who wrote, “Oh! my sister!” after having been addressed as

Penserosa, and having felt the pressure of academic crowns upon her brow. But the most cruel part of it all was that the poor creature was paid in kind. That is a disgraceful system; I know persons who were capable of doing it, but I will not expose them, although they were notorious at the time. Sometimes "the Muse" was overstocked with finery and other wares she knew not how to dispose of. One day she came to see me and told me that she had a stock of fourteen perfectly new bonnets. Would I try to dispose of them among the ladies of my acquaintance? I declined the commission.

In 1860 she went to Italy. I saw her at Naples, and avoided her. It would be easy to follow her through the last stages of her existence, but to what purpose? She had pursued Flaubert to Croisset, even into his mother's drawing-room, and had thrown a burning log at his head. He had succeeded in shaking her off at last. She came back to die in Paris in 1875. A free-thinker, and ready to deny everything because herself a negation, she was anxious to produce a sensation round her death-bed, such as she had not produced in her lifetime; she therefore wrote her testamentary dispositions, and demanded a civil funeral. Her wishes were obeyed. The body was removed to, I know not what village in the outskirts of Paris, and buried in the corner of a cemetery at seven o'clock in the morning. No one remarked the fact. She had long fallen into obscurity; indeed, it may be said that she had never been other than obscure, although she talked complacently enough of herself and of the verdict of posterity.

Her epitaph need not be a long one:—"She who compromised Victor Cousin, ridiculed Alfred de Musset, reviled Gustave Flaubert, and tried to assassinate Alphonse Karr, lies here; Requiescat in Pace!"

In 1863, after the sensation produced by "Salambô," she made an attempt to regain her influence over Flaubert, and to trick herself out with

his honours, but he resisted, and from that time until the end his door was closed to her.

“Salambô” proved that Flaubert possessed qualities the more superficial readers of “Madame Bovary” had not suspected in him. I repeat once more that by this novel he should be judged as a writer, because all his faculties are put forth in it, and he abandoned himself freely to the promptings of his genius. It was the one of his books he always referred to with the greatest tenderness. He was annoyed when people called him the author of “Madame Bovary,” and the books written in imitation of it, and to which it was often compared, secretly humiliated him.

Ernest Feydeau, after he had written his novel “Fanny,” which had a great success, imagined that all the literary genius of the nineteenth century was concentrated in himself.

Mérimée has sketched his portrait with the hand of a master —

“Three days ago I had a visit from M. Feydeau, who is a very handsome fellow, but whose vanity seemed to me almost too *naïf*. He is going to Spain, in order to supplement the work Cervantes and Le Sage only sketched out! There are still about thirty novels he feels called upon to write, and he means to lay the scene of each in a different country. That is why he is travelling.”\*

Feydeau’s vanity was so excessive as to be ridiculous and quite harmless. He used to say —

“There are three of us, Hugo, Flaubert, and I.”

One day when he was engaged in conversation with Flaubert, Bouilhet came in. Feydeau looked at him, and when he had recognized him he said —

“Oh! it is you, my dear Bouilhet; sit down, you are worthy to listen to us!”

I do not know if Bouilhet listened, but I heard what answer he made.

The appearance of “Salambô” was the culmina-

\* “Lettres à une Inconnue,” 12th May, 1860.

ting point in Flaubert's career. A long reprieve had given him hope of having altogether thrown off his nervous illness. He now emerged from seclusion, mixed in society, was well received, and was frankly amused by the little contretemps which occasionally befell him. In one princely house he formed a lasting friendship which was precious to him.

The ladies would gather round him, make much of him, and take him aside one after the other to ask —

“Will you not design Salambô's costume for me to wear at the next ball given at the Tuileries?”

He would recommend Bida, who knew how to excuse himself, and change the subject. Afterwards he came to me and said —

“I have been quite successful with a costume for a fancy dress ball.”

The artists racked their brains to reproduce, under Flaubert's directions, the head-dress and costume of Salambô. They were quite unconscious that the result was a burlesque of the original.

Salambô's costume is that worn by Cleopatra Isis, as represented on the western façade of the Kalabscheh, in Nubia.

Gustave Flaubert was created a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour in the year 1866; he did not derive unmixed satisfaction from this distinction. If on the one hand he was pleased to have the decoration, on the other he felt humiliated by the fact that Ponson du Terrail received it on the same day. He confided in me, and I undertook to console him. I told him that probably Ponson du Terrail was quite as much scandalized at being decorated in company with Gustave Flaubert. He acknowledged that I was probably right.

At this period he began to aim at personal elegance. We told him he was like an old Almanzor, and he would joke with us about it. Some of his friends sent him all kinds of perfumed cosmetics to be applied to the face, and he went into

fits of laughter over them, and these jokes served to divert his mind from too great absorption in his literary occupations. In no society he entered did he pass unobserved. Whatever the impression he otherwise made, it was impossible not to be struck by his vigour, his breadth of view, and his perfect sincerity, which was too often mistaken for a systematic love of contradiction. The ladies, who were interested in him on account of his oddity, found him somewhat of a flirt, and with young men who were trying their wings in literature he had kindly, half paternal manners. His fame had raised him into a high sphere socially, and he felt at his ease in it, as if breathing his native air. Flaubert was pleased with his position, and we rejoiced with him, for in spite of all his eccentricities he was always much beloved by those about him. He seemed to take all hearts by storm. Gaily, and without mentioning it, he would frequent the green-rooms of the *Petits Théâtres*, chat with the actors, observe their characteristics, jot down notes about them, and receive the confidences of two or three over-candid actresses, for he thought of founding a novel upon their but little known experiences. “Only *Le Sage*,” he would say to me, “in ‘*Gil Blas*’ has touched upon the truth. I will reveal it in its nakedness, for it is impossible to imagine how comic it is.”

About this time he was invited to Compiègne. There it was quite forgotten that the order to indict Flaubert for an outrage against public and religious morality had emanated from the Emperor’s private council. Flaubert had forgotten it also, and he was right. Besides he did not object to fine people, and when given his proper position he never seemed out of place. Into this formal and submissive society he brought the spirit of literary independence, a spirit he was imbued with to an unparalleled degree.

One evening in the Empress’s private circle Victor Hugo was spoken of with disrespect. I do not



know if the words expressed a genuine conviction or were meant to flatter. Gustave Flaubert interrupted in no measured terms —

“Stop!” he cried, “he is the master, above us all, and we should uncover when we speak of him.”

His interlocutor tried to insist —

“But, sir, you will admit that the man who wrote the ‘Châtiments’ —”

Flaubert’s eyes began to roll fiercely, and he cried —

“The ‘Châtiments,’ there are some splendid lines in it. Let me recite a few of them.”

It was not deemed prudent to carry on the discussion, which abruptly closed, and someone present gave another turn to the conversation.

Flaubert had not entered into the argument out of the spirit of contradiction, as it might be thought, but from a sense of professional duty, so to speak, and out of respect for poetry. There was no temporizing with him upon such questions. He was ready to run all risks, and he knew that to hide his opinion would be to prove himself unworthy.

## CHAPTER XI.

### EDITORIAL LIFE.

When the *Revue de Paris* was suppressed I asked to be admitted to the pages of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and I shall ever gratefully remember the courtesy with which I was received. The offices of the *Revue* were then situated in the Rue Saint Benoît. They were on the first floor of an old house which stood in a garden. A few lilacs, an acacia, and a little square of grass enlivened the outlook from the rather gloomy rooms where the editorial staff worked amid tables laden with piles of printers' proofs, and surrounded by shelves containing books of reference.

The house was quiet and retired, and the work went on unceasingly. François Buloz, the editor himself, set the example, for he was the most industrious of men. Born in Savoy, on the confines of Switzerland, he was fifty-five years of age when I was first brought into contact with him, and the hardy constitution of a mountaineer seemed to have rendered him impervious to time. He combined within himself all the best qualities of his strong and determined race, energy, perseverance, and, what is better than either, tenacity of purpose. In the original acceptation of the word, he was a creator.

He imposed the review he had founded upon the French public, and compelled it to accept and adopt it for its own. Without disrespect to the English reviews, let me say, it is the first review in the world. Buloz had to contend against the frivolity

and apathy of readers hitherto satisfied with journalistic gossip and journalistic wit.

During a period of nineteen years he fought over every inch of the battle field; each day he gained a little ground. Often he would lose hope, but he never entirely despaired, displayed the most indomitable patience, and ended by triumphing over obstacles which would have deterred any other man.

Early in the year 1831 he assumed the management of the *Revue des Deux Mondes et Journal des Voyages*. He was then young, and the Romanticist School was putting forth its strength. Instead of discouraging young writers he went in search of them, and every form of talent rallied round his undertaking and helped it forward. The index of the *Revue* is like the golden book of modern literature. With rare exceptions it contains every illustrious name, every name of note and of distinction. The variety of subjects discussed was extraordinary. Buloz had erected a kind of literary platform, and all who chose could address the public from it.

His liberality was remarkable; never did he lead a clique or a faction, but addressed a great and multitudinous public, knew and accepted the fact of its multiplicity, and understood that it represented a great diversity of opinion. Notwithstanding his masterful nature and dictatorial ways he left the contributors to their own initiative, and only intervened in matters of detail; of those he was a past master.

He possessed a kind of gift of second sight which often surprised me. Even when the subject was new to him he would detect and point out an error. He did not correct it himself, but called attention to it. Then the author would protest and rebel, but finally, weary of the struggle, agree to verify his facts and discover nine times out of ten that Buloz was right.

The most ordinary printer's error would horrify

him; never was there such a correcter of proofs. Up to the last moment before going to press he was hunting for typographical blunders with an acuteness which was never at fault. I calculated that an article for the *Revue des Deux Mondes* was read and corrected at least fifteen times before it appeared. Buloz was proud of the *Revue's* correct text, and spared no pains to make it as perfect as possible.

It was to be expected that, as the editor of the one periodical which appeared at once to the public in general, he should have enemies among writers whose contributions he had refused. Their vanity was wounded, and they could not forgive him. Few men ever existed who were less accessible to the power of influence and recommendation. He regarded only the interests of the *Revue*, judged everything by that standard, and rejected all productions he thought unlikely to advance the cause he had at heart.

If it be said that with him this was a fixed idea, it was to that he owed his success. Never in my life did I hear him pay a compliment to a writer, and one day he said to me, with reference to Mérimée, "Not one of you knows grammar," which, perhaps, may have been true.

His naturally firm character had grown harder in the endeavour to repress the pretensions which gathered round him, and, under the daily necessity of refusing the constant solicitation by which he was besieged, often in cases which rendered refusal a positive duty. Another reason for this dryness of manner was his constant preoccupation with one set of ideas—his temper suffered, and intercourse with him was not always pleasant. One grew angry and argued with him, but in the end those who were sincere generally admitted that he was in the right, and made their submission. This nature, combative to the point of harshness, had its moments of unexpected tenderness.

On one occasion we were speaking of the early days of the *Revue*, and of the difficulties he had had

to contend with. He was much moved. Tears sprang to his eyes, and he said —

“When I had authors I had no subscribers; now I have subscribers but no authors.”

Several times I surprised the signs of emotion which he had not succeeded in hiding behind the mask of roughness he had assumed. His was a singular character, misjudged because of the rugged exterior he did not try to modify. Nevertheless, the man was remarkable for solid virtues, and for devotion to the work which, with him, took precedence of every other interest. His ideas were lucid and intelligent, but his power of expression laboured and confused, as if the burden of perpetual toil had obstructed his utterance. He gave himself no rest.

Towards the close of his life, when he was deaf and almost blind, he struggled against pain and weakness, and still tried to occupy himself with the control of the *Revue*. Until the end, he constantly thought and spoke to others about it. The authors of the day made the fortune of his review, but in return he brought them into notice and spread their fame in every part of the world where French is understood. They had the best of the bargain.

Buloz did more to propagate French ideas than all the successive Governments under which he lived.

By-and-bye, the history of French literature will be written, dating from the revolution of 1830. Then the best and richest source to consult will be the pages of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

While working for the *Revue* I sometimes contributed miscellaneous articles to the *Journal des Débats*. Its offices were then, as they still are, in the old house of the Rue des Prêtres-Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, where it first saw the light in the early days of the Revolution. Its editor, by right of descent, was Edouard Bertin, whose talent for painting scarcely seemed to point him out for the editorship of a great daily paper, and yet he ex-

celled in this department. Afflicted with a club-foot, he was compelled always to use a cane in walking, and his figure was much contracted. The expression of his face was rather severe, but his appearance was deceptive, for he was extremely amiable and perfectly honourable in his dealings. Seated in his big armchair near the mantelpiece, upon which rested a tumbler and a water-bottle, he often passed his fingers through his long grey hair as he smoked a vile cigar, worth a halfpenny, which he thought exquisite, and smiled at the fun and nonsense we treated him to, while he was himself ready enough to tell some rather racy anecdote. He was accessible to all, and glad whenever it lay in his power to render anyone a service. An indefatigable reader, he had studied deeply, and his conversation was instructive. Himself an intelligent sceptic, he allowed others the most perfect freedom of opinion, and seemed rather to preside at a symposium of guests who each spoke in turn than to guide a political organ which needed to be inspired from one and the same source. Often in the course of a single week, especially during the controversy upon the Roman question, the *pros* and the *cons* would be discussed in the pages of the *Débats*. As the articles were always signed, the responsibility was shifted to the shoulders of their various authors. If Edouard Bertin had any political opinions, which seems to be doubtful, he leant towards Parliamentary Government.

He appeared to have preserved favourable memories of the reign of Louis Philippe, and did not object to the electoral census. He hated the Empire, or, perhaps I should say, he hated the Emperor, which is not precisely the same thing. Each day just as five o'clock was striking at the Church of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois his uncertain footstep could be heard upon the staircase. He had come from his studio on the Quai Voltaire, where he was happy among his pictures and his books. One of the masters of classical landscape, if his

style is a little cold, his compositions are very fine, and conceived with a vigour and loftiness of sentiment no longer fashionable.

His toleration was remarkable. On more than one occasion when we visited the annual exhibitions of pictures together I was struck by the ingenuity with which he would find merits in the most mediocre work.

In matters of art he had no preconceived opinions, and I have seen him admire Courbet's "*Remise aux Chevrenils*" (the goat's stable). Had he written art criticism no doubt he would have been carried away by friendship, and his judgment would scarcely have been impartial.

At the office of the *Débats* he was beloved, for his loyalty of character was thoroughly appreciated there. Men knew that his word was worth its weight in gold, and that a nod from him would be as binding as a legal contract.

I was much attached to him; I was not deceived by his surface bluntness, and I cannot even now think of the hours I spent with him in his studio without emotion.

He had a great respect for one of the other proprietors of the newspaper, whom we called the Père Le Normant, and to whom the printing presses and general plant of the enterprise belonged. Every day Le Normant, like Edouard Bertin, would appear at the same hour, with bowed head and bent form. He walked with difficulty, like the octogenarian he was.

After the usual greeting he would throw himself into an armchair, draw a large magnifying-glass, mended with sealing-wax, from his pocket, and begin to read the newspaper.

This old man, dulled by age, who would sometimes embark upon some interminable story, had been an ardent royalist in his day, and one of the first to hoist the white cockade when the allies had entered Paris. After the return of Napoleon from Elba, in 1815, he had not followed Louis XVIII.

on the road to Lille, nor rejoined him at Gand, but he set vigorously to work to conspire on his account, and organized a plot which was to have exploded as soon as Napoleon should have resumed the command of the army. As in all such cases there were traitors among the plotters; Le Normant was denounced to the authorities and arrested. The Emperor was infuriated, and counselled the Minister of Justice "to make an example of him which would serve as a lesson to incorrigible offenders."

Fortunately the evidence was of a somewhat complicated and lengthy description, but on the 21st June, 1815, Le Normant appeared before the tribunal of the Court of Assizes. As he used to say himself, when telling the story, "his case was not a good one," and his head was at stake. He would have been condemned without a doubt, but during the summing up of the President of the Court news arrived that a battle had been fought, that the army had been destroyed, and that the Emperor had taken flight. For form's sake the jury consulted together. Their verdict was unanimous, and Le Normant was acquitted.

The determination of Wellington and the opportune appearance of Blucher had saved his life. He was fond of telling this anecdote, but he bore Napoleon a grudge in consequence—he did not love him; on the other hand he held that Louis XVIII. had been a great king.

The editor-in-chief of the *Journal des Débats* was neither a free-thinker like Edouard Bertin nor a royalist like Le Normant, but a Jansenist. Samuel-Ustazade Silvestre de Sacy, who superintended the publication of articles and the arrangement connected with the paper, was gentle, lively, and charmingly amiable. The placidity of his temper resembled indifference; only by speaking irreverently of Madame de Sevigné, with whom he was in love, was it possible to rouse him. He looked down upon Victor Cousin, who had constituted himself



the champion of Madame de Longueville. Lacy would shrug his shoulders and say, "Poor Cousin, he does not seem to know Tallemant de Réaux relates that his Dulcinea, who was an adventuress, had dirty hands!"

He was interested in politics, but not in other passing events. The debates in the Chamber, the changes in the Ministry, and diplomatic revelations occupied a part of his thoughts, and he wrote very excellent articles on all these subjects. But outside politics he lived entirely in the age of Louis XIV. with his beloved Marquise, La Bruyère, and Racine. I should be prepared to affirm that he had never read a line of De Musset's poetry nor a page of George Sand's prose. The old Jansenist blood which flowed in his veins retained some of its fire. The promulgation of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception exasperated him. When Ernest Renan published his "Vie de Jésus" he asked, "What is the use of this fifth Gospel? Surely the four others were enough." He had a firm character, and although so gentle he did not conceal his opinions.

When the Commission du Budget of 1876, desirous of punishing Camille Rousset for having given a true version of the legend then accepted with respect to the volunteers of 1792, suppressed the post of Archivist to the War Ministry, Sacy presented himself before the Minister and said: "Sir, no blow struck at liberty is so criminal as that which is aimed at the respect due to historic truth. With your sanction such a blow has been struck."

Eugène Labiche, his successor at the French Academy, described Sacy's character accurately and sympathetically. The term Jansenist implies something of dryness and stiffness, and, therefore, he was sometimes misjudged by those who thought of him in that light. In reality he had nothing of the pedant about him; his manners were not morose, nor even specially reserved. He enjoyed a joke, and even when the fun was a little broad would burst

into fits of laughter, instead of being scandalized. Molière's witty sayings he knew by heart, and his free use of them was doubtless a tribute to the literature of the age of Louis XIV. With his velvet skull cap upon his head, and with his feet encased in cloth slippers, he went about the newspaper office with a brisk and rather jaunty air, and hummed some air from the "Devin du Village," such as "Non, Colette n'est pas trompeuse." His musical education had not gone farther, and I think the harmonies of the present day would have offended his delicate ear. In everything his taste was refined, and I think the crude colourists of modern times must have shocked him. Probably Giotto, with his dreamy, delicate, half-effaced tones, would have been his favourite painter. In literary matters he was an exquisite and an epicure. Certain rather antiquated forms of expression charmed him as the sight of dead leaves charms some landscape painters. Except in the way of journalism he wrote but little, but his prefaces to the different editions he published from time to time of his "Bibliothèque Spirituelle" are marvels of grace and models of taste. I feel inclined to compare him to one of those delicate wines of old vintage which are rather pale in colour, but of exquisite perfume and flavour. He was a type of the literary man, absolutely simple, even though striving to attain the perfection of finish and form he delighted in. It was to him more especially that the *Journal des Débats* owed the literary character it bore during the Second Empire, which was the chief cause of its success. The *Débats* acted as an intermediary between the ordinary daily papers and the larger reviews, in which politics and literature could meet and each find adequate expression.

Ernest Renan's occasional papers were a delight to its readers, as were also Prévost Paradol's articles. Throughout the period during which party controversy was forbidden Silvestre de Sacy was the soul of the *Journal*, and his was a soul which lacked neither enthusiasm nor refinement.

Silvestre de Sacy lived very simply in an apartment assigned to him at the Palais de l'Institut near the Mazarine Library, of which he had been librarian since the year 1848. Near his books, which he loved, and surrounded by his family, to which he was passionately attached, he lived calmly and economically, like a sage. An invitation which was then equivalent to a command summoned him to the Château of Compiègne. He went, and was intoxicated by the light, the diamonds, and the delicious scents. When he entered this fairyland realised the anchorite was dazzled, and the heart of the Jansenist melted within him at the sight of the vanities of the sublunary sphere. He had not strength of will to say "Vade retro!" and he was captivated. He would speak of it with enthusiasm, wave about his small hands, and utter exclamations of astonishment as at the recollection of some supernatural vision. His mind was troubled when he returned. "Which did he now adore," he asked himself, "Madame de Sévigné or the Empress?" The former's literary style was beautiful, but the Empress was so fair. The Marquise had such a fund of wit, but the Sovereign was so graceful. His intimate friends amused themselves with joking him upon this subject. He would smile good-naturedly, but suppress a sigh. His enthusiasm was genuine, so genuine that he became a senator. Edouard Bertin dismissed him from the post of editor in chief of the *Débats* in a letter which was printed on the first page of the Journal.\*

Sacy was thrown back upon mere literary editorship, and had to confine himself to that branch for the future. Once a writer asked him to supply him with some autobiographical notes. He did not refuse the request, and wrote thus: "The same work has occupied my whole life. I have written newspaper articles, and have done nothing else. Further, I have written for one newspaper only, the *Journal des*

\* See the *Débats* of the 27th December, 1865.

*Débats*. I have worked upon it for thirty years, and, in a word, that is the history of my life." No existence could have been more honourable, and through it Sacy became a senator. When our misfortunes befell us he had an outburst of indignation like other honest men at the safe abuse then poured out upon Napoleon III. in consequence of Sedan. He withdrew into privacy, wept for France, and continued faithful to his oath of allegiance.

Silvestre de Sacy's memory recalls the thought of Patin—Père Patin as the innumerable candidates upon whom he conferred their Bachelor's degree used to call him. Patin, like Sacy, may have loved Mme. de Sévigné, Pascal, and Bossuet, but he was so devoted to Latin literature that he felt himself guilty of treason whenever he forsook it for French literature. Like a jealous lover who dreads intruders he would shut himself up in his room to read Horace and enjoy the delight of a *tête-à-tête* with his author. Now and then, always with a surprised and timid air, he would appear at the office of the *Débats*. With one hand he constantly settled his metal-rimmed spectacles upon his nose, but his benevolent expression softened the effect of his ugliness. According to him there could be no salvation for anyone apart from the Humanities. With rapture he would describe the charms of Latin prose and the fascinations of a Greek exercise. Those questions excited him and often made him rather combative. He had not the composure of Guizot, who wrote:—"The Greek and the Roman classics are the good society of the human intellect. Amid the fall of all other aristocracies let us endeavour to retain that aristocracy at least."

Patin would willingly have sacrificed every modern language for the sake of reviving the dead languages, and perhaps like the old Hellenist Haze he wrote out his laundress's account in Greek. One day as he was descending the Pont-Neuf Adrian de

Longpérier perceived a crowd. He drew near and found Père Haze covered with blood.

"My dear master," he asked, "what has happened?"

"A *bigia*, my friend; a *bigia*!"

The *bigia*, it appeared, was a cab which had knocked down the good man. Patin would have been capable of a similar reply, and I daresay he may have called stockings *knemides* in ordinary conversation. I recollect seeing him once just after a regulation which proceeded from the Minister of Education, Jules Simon, had judiciously put a stop to the fabrication of Latin verses. Patin was in despair; poured out his lamentations and raised his hands above his head as if calling upon the gods to witness the disaster. "Oh! Daughters of Mnemosyne, were you slumbering?" he asked. "And what was the moment they selected to lay the trap? Precisely the moment when the students were beginning to take interest in Latin verse. The last Latin verse competition in the second class was very remarkable. Alas! it was the song of the swan," he added, shaking his head, sadly.

As the doyen of the Faculté des Lettres for Paris he generally conducted the examination for the Baccalauréat ès Lettres. He was as indulgent on these occasions as a nursing mother. Once when I was with him he had just been explaining ten lines from Ovid to a young candidate with a self-satisfied face and but little knowledge. Jason was the subject in hand. Père Patin asked —

"Was not Jason assisted by a woman when he went in search of the Golden Fleece? You understand my question?"

The candidate replied —

"Yes, sir—yes, sir."

"Well, then, tell me the name of the woman who helped him."

The candidate no longer hesitated, but pronounced the name, "Andromeda."

Patin replied —

“No, sir. I had told you it was Medea.”

Still, he gave him a “fairly good” after the examination, and when I began to laugh, he said —

“After all the poor fellow made use of a classical name; I ought to take that into account. He might have answered me ‘Madame de Maintenon.’”

I was struck by the incapacity displayed at the examinations I attended, spoke of the matter with Patin, and asked him if we were as ignorant in my day.

His reply is worth quoting.

“You belonged to the batch produced in 1841. You were more advanced, for you had some slight literary leaven which you owed to the influence of the Romantic School, and we were wrong to attempt to combat and suppress it, for it gave you your taste for poetry. You had read Ronsard and Marot, some even knew Garnier, Monchrestien, and Maynard. Now it is different; the elementary studies are always the same—Corneille, Racine, La Fontaine, and Molière. But except those authors they know nothing. After the year 1848 the scholastic standard seemed suddenly lowered, and has never recovered its position. At the present day literature is like the Sleeping Beauty in our schools and colleges. All hail! to the fairy Prince who shall arouse her.”

Mérimée was not wrong when he wrote to Panizzi:—“Literature gives men refined tastes, and that is the great benefit it confers upon them.” We of the *Journal des Débats* had realized that fact, for with us discussions about art, choice editions and bindings by Padeloup, Derôme, Capé, and Bauzonnet were the order of the day. Edouard Bertin’s brother was a bibliophile; his book-mark is a famous one.

Silvestre de Sacy loved beautiful books, and Jules Janin was not afraid of broad margins or costly morocco bindings from the Levant tooled by Marius Michel. He seldom appeared at the office,

because his corpulence and his gout caused him to dread the stairs. If by chance he had contrived to hoist himself on to the first floor and into the editorial room, there was joy in our midst, for his broad face, his jolly laugh, and his witty talk put everyone in a good humour.

His literary style was both pedantic and elaborate; also it was overloaded with Latin quotations; its quaint conceits and far-fetched expressions had at first created a sensation, but it soon became old-fashioned and had a senile air about it which was not sufficiently concealed. He had been called the "prince of critics," a name which did not displease him, and certainly he believed himself to be virtually crowned, and he thought those wanting in taste who were not ready with their acclamations.

I had written an article in the *Journal des Débats* to announce the first appearance of the "Capitaine Fracasse," and I had naturally availed myself of the opportunity to give Gautier his due as a poet and a critic of the drama. This offended Janin, who took me to task and asked me why I had attacked him. The question seemed to me a strange one.

"Where have I attacked you?" I asked.

"Why, in the *Journal des Débats*, in my own paper, by singing the praises of Gautier."

I was thunderstruck, and did not know what to reply.

He would change his opinion of actors without giving any reason for it, and without any corresponding change having taken place in the acting he criticized. After having "invented" Rachel, as he said, he was very severe upon her, and then in a little time again celebrated her talent. He would sometimes accept help, and even collaborate with anonymous writers.

The episode of the daughters of Ségan in his novel "Barnave" was produced by Félix Pyat, the pages about Mirabeau were written by Auguste Barbier, several chapters by Edgar Quinet and

Théodose Burette, and the preface by Etienne Becquet. I have heard him relate that when he began to write "*l'Ane Mort et la Femme Guillotinée*" his original idea had been to ridicule the gloomy inventions of the Romanticists, but that gradually the subject had taken hold upon him, and he had finished a book once intended to parody a school in a more serious vein. Like Père Patin, only in a less happy spirit, he was an almost fanatical admirer of Horace. He would quote passages, and even try to translate him, a weakness in a man of sense. His own personality had taken possession of his mind, and it influenced everything he wrote, even his *feuilletons*; he discussed his cotton nightcap, belauded his parrot, and had the doubtful taste to tell the story of his own marriage. He was like an overgrown child spoilt by the public, and he did not know how to keep within bounds. Work was no effort to him, and he was very prolific. He wrote an extraordinary number of prefaces and introductions. There is not a book of extracts, nor an almanack, nor a periodical of his own time which does not bear upon it his signature, the celebrated "J. J." The weekly *feuilleton* he wrote for the *Débats* did not satisfy him, and he sent "*Courriers de Paris*" to the foreign reviews. His fingers constantly wielded the pen, and his handwriting was so bad that he could not read it himself. He was the despair of printers and compositors.

Jules Janin died in 1875, at the age of seventy-one. His size and his gout incapacitated him latterly and confined him to his house, the little chalet he had built at Passy. Under the gable the line I give below was inscribed; it surprised those who read it upon Janin's house —

"Qui ne sait se borner ne sut jamais écrire."

Scarcely able to drag himself about, scant of breath, and buried in fat, he was no longer able to go to the theatre. Others described the plays to him after first nights, and he would dictate an



article either upon that subject or upon some kindred one for his *feuilleton*.

His works are voluminous, for, besides miscellaneous articles scattered in every direction, he published nearly sixty volumes. My own opinion is that when the relative merits of the works produced in our era are judged, his contribution will not take a high place.

The "Mouchoir Bleu," by Etienne Becquet, another editor of the *Journal des Débats*, is only six pages long, but I think it weighs heavier in the scale than all Janin produced. In spite of his defects, however, he wrote well; still, like many other literary men, he was better as a talker than with the pen.

Philarète Chasles, who also wrote for the *Journal des Débats*, was, like Janin, an indefatigable worker, but incomparably his superior. Chasles would have had proper recognition, no doubt, had he been more orderly in his habits. His father was an unfrocked priest, who became a member of the National Convention and died at the Invalides. This origin seemed to have impressed a certain restlessness upon him, which was apparent even in his external conduct. Life had not treated him kindly. He had begun his career as a journeyman printer in Paris and London. His talent for writing was of a superior kind, and his subtle and profound criticism justified his appointment to be one of the professors at the Collège de France.

With the Italian, English, and German languages he was well-acquainted; this knowledge was the basis of his success. The Classicists and Romanticists waged constant warfare. "Homer and Sophocles," cried the former; "Shakespeare and the Niebelungen Lied," said the latter.

Chasles stood between the contending camps and resolved to give his countrymen a knowledge of foreign literature, which hitherto had been talked about but had not been studied. In this direction he certainly did French letters a signal service. He

was foremost among those who introduced the modern writers of England and Germany to French readers. By itself alone his translation of Jean Paul Richter's "Titan" would have won him a title to our gratitude. Every subject was touched by him, not only with his natural brightness, but with an acumen which is the result of profound knowledge.

He was a skilful compiler, would take five or six foreign works, select what was best from each, and produce an amusing and instructive volume, for the restless vitality he possessed naturally influenced his writings. I remember reading some descriptions of the war in Hungary between 1848-1849 from his pen, which are full of spirit, remarkable for force and sparkle. His writings were the great resource of all compilers of extracts, who were making their start in this kind of production, and who, as they express it in editorial phraseology, were short of copy.

He had always in hand some work recently commenced, the early numbers of which would be inserted. The continuation, however, was not always forthcoming. I recollect that when I was conducting the *Revue de Paris* we had published the first chapters of a translation of the "Mémoires de Lorenzo d'Aponte," but were never able to obtain from him the sequel. He worked in a spasmodic way as the fancy took him, and when looked for he was never to be found. Irritable and impatient under reproof, he was in the habit of growing angry and would then burst into tears and exclaim —

"When will Heaven have pity upon me?"

He had been stripped of everything, made debts, tried to elude his creditors, and to avoid the vigilance of bailiffs. A few thousand-franc bank-notes might have saved him, but these he was never able to command.

When he presented himself at the office of the *Journal des Débats* he was coldly received by the proprietors of the paper. It was easy to perceive

that he had caused them annoyances which had nothing to do with literature. He glided about like a shadow, and in spite of his wig, his dyed moustache, and his lively manners, could not conceal his age.

Dressed in the fashion worn in the year 1835, or about that period, his coat fitted close to his figure, and he wore a high stock which threw back his head. He had the mysterious ways of a ghost, and disappeared from the house without having been seen to leave it. It was usual for him to attribute his misfortunes, or rather his anxieties, to his profession as a literary man.

"We are like the Sudras of Hindoostan," he would say; "we are a proscribed caste."

When he wrote to me he began his letter—"Dear friend and co-Pariah!" This meant that he was subject to a mania which has not yet disappeared, and consists in blaming one's profession for misfortunes which are only due to a man's own folly.

The staff of the *Journal des Débats* was divided into two distinct groups. That which went by the name of the old *Débats* included Edouard Bertin, Le Normant, Silvestre de Sacy, Saint-Marc Girardin, Jules Jonin, Philarète Chasles, Fr. Barrière, and Delescluze, all of whom are dead. The other group, the young *Débats*, was composed of new recruits, some of whom were already able to take the lead.

The most brilliant member of this small band was Prévost Paradol, who was to disappear from the scene before any of his elders. Few men were ever more ambitious, or found it harder to submit to the discipline enforced upon those who were members of the party of opposition he had joined. He had a fine style, great facility of expression, skill in concealing an epigram, and a perfect sense of measure; either he really was or he always appeared pressed for time. He would arrive at the office, exchange greetings with one and the other, take his seat and write off two or three notes in that tall

handwriting he endeavoured to make as like that of Louis XIV. as possible. Willingly would he have adopted the old-fashioned spelling. He tried it, and his friends laughed at him so much that he gave it up. Born in 1829, he was one of the youngest writers upon the *Débats*. He had been a most promising student at the Ecole Normale, classical in his tendencies, and very industrious, with a touch of irony which was apt to appear in spite of his efforts to conceal it.

Although he gained the first prize in philosophy, his heart was really set upon literature.

It has been said that he was dismissed because he refused to take the oath of allegiance after the *coup d'état*, but this is incorrect, because after having been admitted to the degree of Docteur ès Lettres he was appointed Professor of French Literature at the Faculty of Aix, in Provence. But he did not remain there. Aix was too far from Paris, too far from the centre where men's reputations are made and fame is acquired, and where paths open into the great highway of political success. He sent in his resignation, which was accepted, for his high qualities had not been recognized, nor the secret ambition which devoured him. It was then, in 1856, that his connection began with the *Journal des Débats*. At once he revived its rather heavy prose with his sparkling style and bold comparisons. Henceforth the reigning power counted another enemy ever ready for a skirmish, but skilful enough to drop his fire at the approach of danger.

He was tactful and pliable, witty in conversation, but an excellent listener, one of the secrets of success. The circles which represented the opposition in Parliament gave him a warm welcome. In fact, he was the spoilt child of that society, and people saw in him the Martignac of the future. Such a rôle suited his tastes; he was fond of luxury, did his best to acquire elegant manners, and to imitate in a very obvious way the gestures of

certain personages. He looked forward to the future with confidence. What position, he asked himself, might he not hope to reach? Had he not been at the Ecole Normale like Villemain, Victor Cousin, and Guizot? Had he not once been a Professor like Royer-Collard? His appearance was insignificant, his head too long, his figure wanting in proportion, and his legs too short; he was small, and walked with a jerk.

There was a charm about his voice, which had a hollow sound in the deeper notes, and which he would occasionally raise as if to attract attention. That is a precept of Quintilian's he had learnt to observe. Politics had engulfed him. Classics, which had formerly attracted him, were abandoned; French letters, which enroll so many ardent recruits; history, in which he might have won laurels; everything vanished before the dream of his ambition, and his great abilities were devoted to writing articles which had the life of a day, to being the first political leader writer of a Paris paper.

The career Prévost Paradol followed has always surprised me, but man is the slave of his temperament, as the animal is of his instinct. One might have thought that he was desirous of preparing himself for his future greatness, and to serve an apprenticeship in the pleasures and luxuries of the lofty sphere he was about to enter. He liked to ride, and people lent him horses; he was also fond of good living, and they invited him to dinner. The opera gave him pleasure, and friends kept a seat in their box for him. But he liked also the performances at the Petits Théâtres, and he went to them unaccompanied. I have often watched him with interest when he met any of his old companions of the Ecole Normale. He made himself agreeable, but with a kind of indifferent condescension of manner, which showed that he was on his guard and seemed to say, "It is true that we once sat on the same benches, but we do not visit in the same houses." But the promising pupil of the schools

had not disappeared altogether. One day, at the office of the *Débats*, we were discussing the famous distich of Palladas, and he was astonished to hear writers who had not been grounded, that is to say who had not been through the studies necessary for a professor, quote Greek. He was the more surprised because, he said, he was unacquainted with the lines we were talking about. That was one of his little weaknesses.

I do not think he would have been successful in imaginative writing. A short story he published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*\* displays defects of composition, which do not appear in his political writings.

This story made a sensation in certain salons; its author was even accused of creating a scandal. The plot of the story was founded on fact, and the masks worn by the characters were so transparent that in spite of a fanciful ending they could easily be recognized. Certain writers, who were innocent of this pardonable slip, were accused. The perpetrator tried to hide himself, but expressed himself so indignantly, so much more indignantly than anyone else, that he was discovered. A week after the story had appeared in the *Revue*, Prévost Paradol wrote and signed an article in the *Débats* (8th February, 1860) in which he pronounced "Madame de Marçay" "a mediocre performance, wearisome to the reader." Further, he counselled its anonymous author not to repeat the experiment. The advice was excellent, but Paradol would have been wiser had he held his peace, for no one was deceived by his subterfuge, which was too *naïf* by far.

During 1866, the time of the war between Prussia and Austria, he seemed possessed of prescience, and his vision of the future was to be realized only too sadly. Most of us can remember the excitement produced by that rapid campaign, which closed with the overthrow of Austria upon the field of Sadowa.

\* See *Revue des D. M.*, 1st February, 1860, "Madame de Marçay."

All thoughtful men were disturbed, and turned with anxiety and preoccupied thoughts to observe Prussia, which had certainly exhibited an aggressive spirit that had lain dormant since the death of Frederick the Great.

There was an instinctive feeling that modifications had taken place in the vital conditions of the French national and political organism, and that henceforth our Eastern frontier was in contact with what was now a united and ambitious power. The axis upon which the European States had rested was shifted, and the political equilibrium would not be restored until a new centre of gravity had been found. As yet this was but dimly perceived through the mists which hung over Germany in its hour of fusion, but the sense of apprehension was present in most hearts as at the approach of an unknown danger. Only one member of my circle of intimate friends was untouched by the vague uneasiness which affected our spirits.

Gustave Flaubert was annoyed when we discussed a question upon which our future existence might depend. Flaubert belonged to a band of writers, politicians, and thinkers, all distinguished in their different ways, who twice a month met for discussion round the same table. These symposiums lacked only an Athenæus. One Monday evening Flaubert came to my house in a furious temper. He told me that he had just left the table at which his friends were dining because they had insisted on talking politics, and he asserted that to do so was unworthy of intellectual men.

"What," he inquired, "are Prussia and Austria to us? These men pretend to be philosophers, and yet they are interested to know which have won, blue uniforms or white ones. After all they are only so many *bourgeois*. It pains me to see X., Y., and Z. lose their time discussing annexation, the rectification of frontiers, the dismemberment, and the reconstruction of States, as if they had nothing better to talk about, as if there were no fine verse

to recite, no noble prose to write!" I could not succeed in calming him.

"They are only *bourgeois*!" he repeated. "We are neither Frenchmen nor Algonquins, but artists, and art is our country. Let those who acknowledge any other go to the devil!"

This was extravagant talk, nevertheless his patriotism was undoubted, for when France was forced to yield to Germany, Flaubert was affected to the point of tears, and even fell ill of grief.

Prévost Paradol cared but little for art at such times. He grasped the fact that sooner or later the struggle must be fought out between two neighbouring powers who thought themselves of equal force and each of which desired pre-eminence. Under this impression he wrote his book, "*La France Nouvelle*." Some of its premises may appear questionable, but as a prophecy it is remarkable, for its predictions have been fulfilled. In no uncertain terms he announced the coming war and foretold the defeat of the French arms. Had he lived he might have exclaimed, like Chateaubriand, after the revolution of July: "In vain, Cassandra, have I wearied the ears of monarchy with my voice of warning!" The warnings uttered by Prévost Paradol and by many others were not listened to. The measure of army reform proposed by Marshal Niel was so much modified that, had it been rejected altogether, the result would have been the same. Prévost Paradol was called a grievance-monger, and only after the catastrophe did men acknowledge that he had been in the right.

After the ministry of the 2nd of January, 1870, had been formed—a ministry whose advent to power established liberal institutions—Prévost Paradol, who had twice failed to win the electorate, no longer held back, but acknowledged himself prepared to serve the new order of things. He had only desired liberty. Once he had secured that he was satisfied, was ready to co-operate, and acted with perfect consistency. Nevertheless, he was not



spared reproaches, and the cry of treason was raised. Men who had made use of him to serve their own political passions and not to advance his withdrew from him and conceived that they had warmed a serpent in their bosom. Prévost Paradol was too much affected by their behaviour. Surely he knew that to insult misfortune and to detract from success is part of man's nature.

While his old friends spoke of him somewhat coldly, men such as Odilon Barrot, Freycinet, Dupont-White, and many others, who were attached to the Liberal Imperial party, treated him with a warmer respect, and when he sat upon the commission for the decentralization of authority they seemed to listen for a word from his lips before proposing a resolution or closing a debate. While other orators were expected to speak from their seats, for him an improvised tribune would be arranged; he was listened to in silence and loudly applauded.

I was often present at these debates, and I had no difficulty in perceiving that he understood nothing of the democratic movement which stirs the multitude in every nation and of which universal suffrage is the imperfect expression. Prévost Paradol still hoped to save the influence of the *bourgeoisie*, of the cultivated classes, as he repeated, like many another. He imagined that political reforms could appease social reformers, and that social plunderers will voluntarily stay their hand when confronted with liberal institutions. Like a young, theoretic Epimenides suddenly aroused from a forty years' sleep, he repeated in 1870 the arguments which were current in 1830. The sittings were held in the apartments of the Conseil d'Etat.

Let me confess that I was often, to my shame be it said, more absorbed in looking at Eugène Delacroix's, Flandrin's, and Chassériau's pictures than in listening to discussions, in the course of which Odilon Barrot would inform us of the fact

that for forty years "I have studied the subject and am still far from arriving at a conclusion."

Sometimes Prévost Paradol would walk back with me across the gardens of the Tuileries, for we both lived on the left bank of the Seine. One day, as we walked together, I said to him —

"Why do you not write a history of political ideas? That would be an interesting subject and one suited to your powers."

He replied in the benevolent fashion, which betrayed his confidence in himself —

"How fortunate you are still to be able to believe in books, in phrases; to be still able to amuse yourself with such useless baubles, the pastime of idle people." He remained a moment silent and then he added: "There is no reality except in the power of ruling over men. The only object worth living for, and one only possible of attainment by strong wills and great minds, is that of leading men. The highest aim is to command their destinies, to lead them to greatness by paths they know not of, to arrange facts, control events, and compel fortune to obey our behest."

We were walking through the central grand alley of trees, through which the palace was seen in the distance, and I asked him this question —

"What, then, is your dream?"

He stood still and pointed in the direction of the Pavillon de l'Horloge, then, with a kind of enthusiasm I had not observed in him, he continued —

"The Master of France is there. Very well; I should like to be that master's master."

I replied —

"When you have become the Richelieu of that Louis XIII., I will ask you to grant me a very trifling favour—access to the record office of the Court of Appeal and permission to study in it. It contains historical treasures I should like to unearth."

He shrugged his shoulders slightly and assured me that I was quite incorrigible.

Prévost Paradol had been ready to offer himself, and, indeed, had given himself freely to the cause of a Liberal Empire, and the Empire had been in no haste to accept the gift. It troubled, surprised, and humiliated him to find that he was not at once called upon to fill some high position. The new ministers did not, perhaps, appreciate his talents as much as he could have desired. He felt that he was placed in a false position, grew weary, and wished to escape from it. Accordingly, he sought an interview with a very important personage, who had the privilege of working with the Emperor alone and who possessed his confidence. To him Prévost Paradol spoke quite frankly, and asked for a diplomatic post, at least, until something else should be available.

A week after this interview he was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to the United States of America at the instigation of Napoleon III. himself.

The opposition newspapers hinted at every species of perfidy, the indignation which had been felt before increased, and even those who would themselves have accepted his post with avidity reproached him for not having refused it. People carried their injustice in his case to the verge of cruelty.

I saw him a few days before his departure. He was uneasy, and Washington seemed very far off, farther a great deal than Aix in Provence.

"Bah!" I said, "you will soon be back. In less than two years you will have been made a minister."

He replied by asking me a question —

"And what do you mean to do?"

"To go on with my work in Paris, that is all."

Rather sadly he replied —

"Perhaps you are right."

He met with a somewhat cold reception in America. The Republicans of the New World, who are capable of every form of vanity, thought it scarcely a mark of proper respect to send them a distinguished

writer; the most insignificant baron would have pleased them better.

Prévost Paradol was now lost to literature. I had always hoped that he would turn to it again when the reaction from his ambitious schemes should come upon him.

I bear politics a standing grudge because they have diverted from the pursuit of letters so many eminent men without any compensating advantage to the business of the country. Politics had demoralized poets, historians, and great thinkers. Chateaubriand never gained anything by them, Victor Hugo lost prestige, and Lamartine was entirely absorbed by them. "Adolphe" is worth more than all the speeches of Benjamin Constant.

It was, therefore, with regret that I watched the departure of Prévost Paradol, although I little suspected what fate he had reserved for himself. No sooner was war declared between France and Germany than his own predictions rose up before his mental vision with all the clearness of an accomplished fact. He realized that without allies, and surrounded by unfriendly States, with an army of inferior numerical strength, and a country divided by contending factions, which, in the moment of defeat, would think, not of the ruin of France, but of the fall of the Empire, the game must be an unequal one. Our cause, he firmly believed, was hopeless from the beginning, and the overthrow of the country inevitable.

Events were about to occur in the near future which he was unwilling to witness. Therefore he committed suicide. The death of Prévost Paradol produced but a slight impression in Paris, for it took place when the city was in a ferment; the crowd was singing the "Marseillaise," shouting "à Berlin," and confident of victory.

When we were about to cover ourselves with glory, and to repeat the brilliant achievements of our ancestors, what mattered the loss of one brilliant thinker?

His tragic end was deplored by those who had loved him, by me among the number. Commander Prévost, his real father, and not his reputed father, as has been said, whom he closely resembled, had ended his life in the same manner. The history of insanity proves that suicidal mania is a disease which develops hereditary tendencies.

## CHAPTER XII.

LOUIS DE CORMENIN.

IN my arrogant youth, in the palmy days of early manhood, I had painted my own portrait thus —

“ Je suis né voyageur, je suis actif et maigre,  
J’ai comme un Bédouin, le pied sec et cambré,  
Mes cheveux sont crépus ainsi que ceux d’un nègre  
Et par aucun soleil mon ceil n’est altéré.”

My step has lost its activity, the wintry blast has blown upon my brow, sprinkled it with its hoar frost, and bared my temples. The sun has taken vengeance on me for my impertinent boast, and I am compelled to use a high number in spectacles. I was proud of my sight; the first to notice a covey of partridges alight upon the ground, and an indefatigable reader.

It was about the year 1862 that my eyes began to give me pain, and in spite of the free use of eye-washes they continued to do so. I was advised to consult an optician, and one day in the month of May I went to see Secretan. The assistant placed a book before me at the usual distance, and I threw back my head to read it.

“ Why,” he said, “ you must be going to play the trombone. That means that you will have to wear spectacles.”

Old age was at hand. I did not welcome him with a good grace, but I resigned myself. I asked for a pair of opera-glasses and for spectacles.

The right glasses had to be fitted, I must wait for half-an-hour, so I went away and seated myself upon

one of the benches of the Pont-Neuf. It was a beautiful day, with occasional gleams of sunshine.

A raft covered with wood was floating down the Seine, and a bathing-station was being fixed to its moorings in the river. On shore I watched the smoke rising towards the clouds from the chimneys of the Hôtel des Monnaies, a cab rank along the Quai, and the omnibuses passing backwards and forwards, then a number of police-constables came out of the Prefecture, formed themselves into groups, and took their several ways; a prison-van appeared upon the Place Dauphine, and threaded its course among carriages and foot-passengers; and a costermonger's cart was being pushed along near me. I know not why a scene I had so often witnessed should have struck me more than usual on that day.

Why did I suddenly seem to see evidence in the midst of the apparent confusion of organization and forethought? I cannot say, but at that moment I thought of Paris as of a great living organism having many members, set in motion by functions which acted with perfect regularity and accuracy. I fell into a reverie which was so much the more profound because of the noise and confusion round me. I remained rooted to the spot and absorbed in my new train of thought. When it began to grow dark I awoke from my dream, and then only did it occur to me that the optician had expected me two hours before. I had decided to study one by one and each in its turn the different springs which give impetus and movement to the complicated machinery of Paris life.

Such a scheme opened out an entirely new path from those I had followed previously, but I entered it without hesitation. Like a man who sets his affairs in order before starting on a long journey, I laid aside a few literary projects which encumbered the way, and I engaged resolutely in a course of study I should formerly have believed myself incapable of undertaking.

How many times have I not felt thankful to that failure of sight which had led me to visit Secretan, caused me to rest upon the Pont-Neuf, and opened up indirectly such a field of work and of inexhaustible interest. The satisfaction I derived from having to struggle with facts instead of with the misty ideas contained in novels and in poetry filled me with wonder. I could stand now upon a firm foundation, penetrate the unknown, and be confronted with fresh facts at every turn, forcing me to attempt a kind of mental gymnastics to which I had never been accustomed. I was also occupied with a world of realities which constantly excited my enthusiasm. My mind was disciplined, unknown to myself, by the truths I had to deal with, and imperceptibly I accustomed myself to practical ideas. I shall be told that this proves I was neither poet nor novelist. That such is the case I am ready to admit, and as I look back upon the past it seems to me that all I wrote previously was merely an apprenticeship to fit me for the difficult task I had before me.

I did not discuss my project beforehand with anyone, but neither did I conceal it from Louis de Cormenin and Gustave Flaubert, whose silence could be relied upon. The subject I meant to treat was so simple, one so accessible to all, that I fancied it might be easily appropriated. Louis de Cormenin approved, and although he was a little alarmed by its length, he advised me to devote myself to the work with all my energy and perseverance.

Flaubert listened to what I had to say, and when he understood my plan he gave me the following counsel: "Go down into the depths of Paris life, study its most mysterious forms, and then write a novel into which you will compress the observations you have noted down." He then went on to explain a theory I had already heard from the lips of Ernest Feydeau. "The most absolutely perfect historical document is the novel. In future no one will be able to write the history of the reign of



Louis-Philippe without consulting Balzac. The novel is a work of the imagination, inspired by facts. The details ought to be technically accurate and incontrovertible, for to that characteristic it owes its value as a human chronicle. Simply to treat Paris like a machine, take it to pieces, and examine the working of its component parts is to be a mere mechanic. If on the other hand you wish to be a writer you must take Paris to pieces with a view to reproduce the mathematical precision of its organic life. If you hesitate you will be mistaken, if you make a wrong choice you will be criminal."

I had to confess that I had decided to be criminal and a mechanic.

He did not spare me reproaches, and treated me to one of his favourite similes. "Beware! you are standing upon an inclined path! You have already given up the use of quill pens and taken to steel ones, which is a proof of weakness. Again, in your preface to '*Chants Modernes*,' you wrote an amount of thoroughly degrading nonsense. You belauded commerce and sang the praises of steam. That is drivel and Saint Simonianism. Not satisfied with such baseness you are now about to produce official literature. If you do not pause you will soon apply for a registrar's post."

I was accustomed to these outbursts of petulance, and they did not distress me. His most cutting witticism would be couched in the following terms: "I have just learnt, with satisfaction, dear old economist, that at length justice has been done you, and that you have just been appointed assistant custom-house officer at the wine dépôt."

I laughed myself, and was a constant source of amusement to him. When I published my account of *Underground Paris*,\* he called me the drain-pipe man, and I bore the nick-name as long as he lived.

I set to work eagerly, for the subject had aroused

\* "*Paris ses organes, ses fonctions et sa vie dans la seconde moitié du dix-neuvième siècle*," 6 Vol., Hachette.

my enthusiasm. An account of my experiences during the time I spent in writing this book\* would be interesting, for I followed all kinds of trades and occupations.

I passed a considerable part of the day at the General Post Office, and might have been a clerk employed at the Banque de France. I felled oxen and followed detectives on their rounds, accompanied vigilance agents when on duty, and the inspectors of common lodging-houses. I watched men condemned to death through their last hours, and until their bodies lay in the dissecting room. With the dwellings of the poor I made myself familiar, and I have slept upon a hospital bed. I have tracked out smugglers with the officers of the custom-house, have ridden on the engines of express trains, and shut myself up in a lunatic asylum to study the phenomena of insanity.

It is not too much to say that I feared no fatigue in the pursuit of my object, and that I shrank from no inquiry, however repulsive its details. But such recollections do not really bear on literature. I must not stray from my subject to dwell upon incidents which are of a purely personal character and cannot interest my readers.

Louis de Cormenin urged me to set to work at once upon my Parisian experiences. He was eager to see how I should treat a subject to which I was so completely a stranger. But I was determined to lay my plans well, and before I began to write on my own account I had to read and to take notes of the works of Sauval, Félibien, and Delamarre, no slight task. Therefore my first chapter, "Les Postes," did not appear in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* until the 1st January, 1867, not until after the death of Louis de Cormenin. All that was best in me died with him. When as children we used to shed tears together over the "Petit Savinien," and dream of discovering desert islands, he was as

\* "Paris, ses organes, ses fonctions et sa vie dans la seconde moitié du dix-neuvième siècle." 6 Vol., Hachette.

strong and robust in health as I was frail and sickly. People prophesied long life for him, whereas they feared an early death in my case, and my feeble, fluctuating health was a constant anxiety to my family. During my youth I met with every possible accident. Falls from my horse, gun-shot wounds, sword-cuts, sunstrokes, and illnesses which were expected to terminate fatally, none of these were spared me. Once even I was poisoned by mistake. I had survived everything, and I still survive, but Louis, with his powerfully knit frame, his immunity from accidents of every kind, and from illness, whose days passed so tranquilly, was to leave me alone, and to die at the comparatively early age of forty-four. The blow was so severe that I never entirely recovered from it.

When I absorb myself in dreams of the past, and the returning tide of memory seems to give me back those I have lost, I welcome the thought of that dear companion of my life with tenderest longing; I imagine that he is still with me, and that I can spend hours in his company. I speak to him of his son, who is now a man, and who bears a striking resemblance to his father. Then, without concealment, I tell him all that has happened since he left us, and how often when I turn to the tale of disaster, the experiences we have passed through, war, defeat, dismemberment, the story of the Commune and of its frantic incendiarism, do I not exclaim "You were right to die?" Soon, however, as if to deliver me from painful thoughts, he seems to revive in me the recollection of our early childhood, when with tottering footsteps we clung together at the dawn of life; each little incident is present to me, even the hay-ricks at Chailleuse we could slide down without danger to ourselves. Again I hear him repeat, "*Ce n'est point-n'à toi!*" and I smile at the thought of the rule of the penultimate. Once more I fancy we are at play together in days when if one of us was missing it was only necessary to look for the other, for we were never far apart.

Thus once more with him, I wander through the paths of my childhood, pleasant paths I love to linger in. Those about me respect my silence, and imagine that I am following out some train of thought. Little do they think that in spirit I am with Louis running about under the chestnut trees of the Tuileries, or else seated beside my grandmother in our home while she sings us the song of the Malplaquet dragoons. Now, my childhood is to me like some far distant country, a land of enchantment which I can no longer revisit, because those who used to return there with me have gone away for ever. I am the last inhabitant of that vanished world. To speak of it with those who never knew it is unavailing. If I were to ask them to recall any of its conditions they would reply, "How can I possibly remember it?"

In the year 1860 I consulted Desbarolles, curious to know what he would say. He studied the lines in my hand, and told me that I was about to have a long and painful illness. I did not heed the warning; I was wrong, for the illness which attacked me did not take a mild form, and lasted for three years. I had three separate attacks of acute arthritis, and each extended over a period of seven months. Towards the close of the last of these attacks my sufferings became almost unbearable. I could not write, or turn the pages of a book, or sleep. I was taken out of doors in a chair carried by men, and I was miserable. It was the summer of the year 1863, I went to live at Baden-Baden, near the Black Forest, and there the waters cured me. Pain and the want of sleep had produced such a state of weakness that a doctor who 'diagnosed my case declared that I was in a galloping consumption, and bound for the other world. Like some nervous patients I die many deaths, but they have not buried me yet.

Unknown to me Louis had been informed of my condition. He hurried off to visit me, arrived one Sunday evening, and gazed at me with terror in his

eyes. To hide his emotion he went behind my bed, but forgot that his tears had fallen upon my face. The next day I slept, and on the Wednesday following I was able to walk. I said to Louis, "You have cured me." He smiled at me, and I returned the smile, but it was a pleasing coincidence for us both.

The crisis of the illness was over, and I began to improve from the time of his auspicious arrival. He stayed with me for three weeks; we lay once more in the shade of the trees together, as in our boyhood's days, and led a life in common, as we dearly loved to do. Directly he was back in Paris, on the 15th August, 1863, he wrote me word: "It was a great pleasure to me to spend three weeks with you, and I wish I could often repeat the happy experience. But it is not always possible to do as one would wish, and I have other duties, a wife and children. I have no reason to complain; I have drawn a lucky number in life's lottery. Had it not been for my father probably I should never have married, but stayed always with you, and we should have shared every thought. Nevertheless, you will ever retain a first place in my affections, side by side with the dear ones I have about me. You were good and kind to me, as I knew you would be beforehand, and almost paternal in your affection."

What Louis said here was true. Had he not finally yielded to the pressure his father put upon him, who thought only of perpetuating his name, and married we should have lived constantly together, and notwithstanding the difference of our natures, in perfect sympathy. What the one lacked the other would have supplied. I should have lent him some of my impetuosity, he would have given me a little of his calm. Thus we should have grown into a closer resemblance, and the advantage would have been chiefly on my side. When in the spring of 1866 I left him to go to Baden there was no special sign of illness about him, except that he had grown thinner and dozed a good deal. A month later I heard that

he was ill, much weaker, and subject to frequent attacks of pain. Unfortunately he had placed himself in the hands of a foreign homœopath, who went by the title of doctor, although he was only a sanitary inspector with a speciality for prescribing astringent globules to lady singers who had overstrained their voices.

Under his skilful treatment Louis' illness could only be aggravated, and a visit to Plombières produced no beneficial effect. I began to be anxious, and finally he consented at my earnest entreaty to see two competent physicians, Drs. Trousseau and Maximin Legrand. They examined him and found that he was suffering from cancer of the stomach. There was nothing to be done for him; his case was hopeless. Half as a joke, in order not to alarm him, I proposed to become his sick-nurse. He refused, because the idea of my presence seemed to confirm the fears which he strove to banish. Every two or three days he wrote me letters, and tried to give himself confidence by assuring me that he was well.

I need not say that I was in receipt of accurate information; I carried on a secret correspondence with the doctors who attended him. He was able to go to Joigny, and to his country place of Chailleuse, of which he was extremely fond. His doctor, a clever and conscientious man, wrote to me: "I conceal his real state from him, and, indeed, he has no desire to know it. Unhappily there is no ground for doubt as to the termination of the illness. I expect all will be over about next February or March." In the middle of November Louis let me know that he would return to Paris on the 25th of the month. I made every arrangement so as to arrive at the same date in the capital, with the wish to remain near him during the last months of his life. On the 22nd, a Thursday, the day before my departure, I had gone shooting for the last time in the mountains. In the evening when I returned I took up the letters which lay upon my table. One

of them was bordered with black, and I did not recognize the handwriting. I opened it hastily, and read it through more than once without understanding its meaning. It contained the following lines :—

“Joigny, Tuesday, 20th November, 1866.

“I would not have you learn from any other source the terrible grief that has befallen us. Our dear Louis is no more. Two days ago, in the evening, he was still full of life, and now I have just seen him breathe his last.

“HÉLÈNE.”

My horror was so great that I could not even remember at the moment that Madame de CORMENIN's name was HÉLÈNE, and I could not take in the meaning of the letter. The very day I received it he had been buried. I was hunting for chamois and looking for birds while the prayers of the Church were being said over the black pall which covered him.

On Monday, the 19th, he had had a frightful attack. Weakened as he already was, he could not throw it off, and the following day he felt that death was near at hand. He was not one of those who believe only in matter, nor did he imagine that our immortal soul is at the mercy of our bodily organism, therefore he sent for a priest and listened to his exhortations. If he confessed his sins the list was not a long one. Seven words would have summed up the whole, “I have done only what was good.”

Before the end his sight failed him, he moved his hands like a wounded bird, and said to those about him, “I did not know it was so easy to die.”

On the 14th of December I wrote to Théophile Gautier, and I ended my letter thus —

“I returned home a fortnight ago, and I should have been to see you had I not been ill. I wished to talk with you about our poor Louis. You and I were the only two who saw into his soul, and knew how much had been suppressed in him by the conditions of his life. His death overwhelmed me, and

I cannot recover from it. I am like one of the Siamese twins after the death of the other. I try to realize my life without him, and I am unable to do so." \*

This letter contains no exaggerated expression of feeling, but simply describes my condition after the loss I had sustained, which deprived me of one whose nature was, as it were, the complement of my own. It also refers to Louis' gifts, which were really only fully known to Gautier and myself. Except with us, he would never open his heart.

However great his intimacy with others might appear, he did not reveal himself to them. No man was ever more mentally and spiritually modest. His shyness was only a form of reserve. Like those plants which only flourish in certain atmospheric conditions, he never gave reins to his thought except in the presence of the closest and warmest friendship. I have known him spend whole evenings among lively and talkative companions without uttering a word. Scarcely would he express his sentiments by a look or a gesture, but when it was time to separate he would return home alone with me and take up the thread of the talk we had heard with remarkable vivacity and power. He was so constituted that the outer world weighed him down and reduced him to a taciturn condition he had no desire to shake off. Louis was a dreamer, and, by a strange anomaly, an ironical dreamer. He had a special talent for discovering the weaknesses of those he came in contact with and the seamy side of things. Not for nothing was he the son of a political pamphleteer. Had not the fear of causing pain and the extreme gentleness of his nature blunted the edge of his sarcasm, he would have been bitter in invective and formidable in retort.

I have in my possession many letters of his in which he describes the debates in the Corps Législatif he delighted to attend. They are models of

\* It is to the kindness of the Vicomte Spoelberch de Lovenjoul that I owe access to this letter.



discriminating criticism and of incisive irony. Paul-Louis Courier has written nothing better. His wit was spontaneous, and the darts he flung with apparent good-humour struck home the more surely on that account.

In his powers of work he surpassed Méry, he who was so vain of his gift in that direction. His productive faculty was like a constantly bubbling spring, and resembled the improvisatore's art. He needed only two hours to complete one of the dramatic *feuilletons* he wrote for the *Presse*, which he signed himself, and which Théophile Gautier signed. Only the first sentence was a trouble to him, with that he sometimes had to be supplied. He used to say, "I am like a syphon, I must be set going."

When he undertook to write upon any subject he would say to Gautier or to me, "How am I to begin?"

Hardly was the reply given than he was already at work, and without pausing to take breath he finished the article in hand, and never re-read what he had written. When quite a boy he had the same facility.

His father used to practise him in descriptive writing, and when he saw the pages rapidly accumulate he would remember his own laboured style and grow indignant.

"You do not take time to reflect," he used to say to Louis, in his slow voice. "You must reflect more; I wish you to reflect."

After a quarter of an hour he would come back to see if his son were meditating, and find him asleep.

Of his numerous and very original verses we were scarcely able to save anything. Those only survive which he wrote me when at school and college. He often wrote verses, shut them away in a drawer, and when the drawer was full he emptied it into the fire. That was what he called "liquidating his account with the Muse."

He liquidated it too often. Among the poems he destroyed some were charming, and deserved to live. I often quarrelled with him on account of this habit, and Gautier lectured him more than once upon the subject. He would shrug his shoulders slightly and say —

“It is only a pastime, and does not concern the public.”

His modesty was so excessive that it amounted to self-effacement. He sought the shade as gladly as others seek the light. The thought of a wide publicity filled him with alarm. But as, in spite of his usual indifference, he sometimes felt the need of expression or a desire to put forth an opinion upon some subject which interested him, he would send articles occasionally to the Orleans or Auxerre newspapers, such as many a Paris newspaper would have printed in large type. As it was, they were surreptitiously produced and buried out of sight in the columns of a provincial journal.

After his death the indexes of these two local newspapers were searched, as well as the pages of the *Revue de Paris*, and two octavo volumes were the result, which prove not what he might have been, but what he was.\*

For a reason I shall state presently, and because of a constitutional indolence which debarred him from entering the lists of the literary tournament, he would have added lustre to the name he bore and left traces of his presence among us. Of all the young men with whom at about the age of twenty I associated he and Flaubert were the two whose future career seemed to give the most certain promise of future eminence. His style would have been less high-flown than Flaubert's, and more sympathetic than Bouilhet's; he would not have

\* “Reliquiæ,” 2 vols., in 8vo, 1868, Imprimerie Pillet. They are inscribed with the following epigram:—“Abstulit abra dies et funere messit acerbo.” Only a few copies were printed, and not for general circulation.

fallen so often into description as does Gautier, and he would have been more natural than Baudelaire.

Louis knew how to make use of the unexpected, and in more than one respect he would have resembled Heinrich Heine. He bore a well-known name, an undoubted advantage in which the rest of us were lacking. Yet this advantage it was which arrested his career and condemned him to a silence which became a habit with him, and which he could never afterwards throw off.

I know that I touch here on delicate ground, but one must deal faithfully by the dead, and I mean to speak without reserve.

Timon, Louis' father, was extremely proud of the name of Cormenin, which he had raised to fame. He had even made it popular with the crowd, and he regarded it as a sacred possession which must be handed down intact. During Louis' boyhood, during his schooldays and early youth the phrase constantly addressed to him was—

“You owe it to the name you bear!”

It was ever upon his mother's lips, and his father did not spare him its repetition. In the end he wearied of his name, and uttered it as seldom as possible.

We knew and respected his sensitiveness, which we understood, and we were in the habit of calling him either Buridan, the surname he bore until his marriage, or by his christian name.

When he left school and was supposed to be “free to live as he chose,” that is to say under the lynx-eyed observation of his anxious family, the same refrain still haunted him—

“Take care you do not compromise the name!”

Once he published the following lines in some small newspapers:—

“Malgré ta forte férule,  
Ton gourdin armé de clous,  
Cupidon te caligule,  
Toi, le roi des tourlourous :  
File, file, bon Hercule,  
File, file, file doux !”

They were signed with his initials, L. C.

Poor Timon was almost beside himself, and reiterated —

“What are we to do? You have compromised your name. Your friend Maxime always tempts you to do something unseemly.”

He invariably turned upon me when he was annoyed, but I did not distress myself for so slight a cause.

This perpetual thought about the name made Louis feel as if he were living in a glass-case. He was afraid to move lest he should break or star the glass. The moral bondage in which he lived filled me with impatience, and I rebelled against the limitations to which he was subjected. I said to him —

“Cormenin is your father’s name; the name goes with a title you do not bear at present. Your patronymic, your real name is La Haye. Adopt it, sign yourself La Haye, and laugh at all the rest.”

But Louis dared not do as I suggested. The veneration he felt for his father was such that he would never have ventured to commit an act of insubordination, however trifling. I will quote two instances of his exaggerated respect for his father’s opinion.

Louis had promised to be my second in an affair of honour which was to come off at Saint-Germain. Just as we entered the carriage, he said —

“I cannot go with you to the end. I am afraid of compromising my father.”

I was obliged to dispense with his services and to induce an officer in a dragoon regiment whom I fell in with, but whom I did not know, to take his place.

On another occasion, much later, and after his marriage, he went to an evening party, where the old-fashioned plan—a bad one—of announcing the guests was still retained. The servant asked him his name, and he replied, “Monsieur and Madame Louis.” Was Timon’s one idea the dread of Louis

doing that which he was incapable of doing, something which might compromise him?

I would believe that to be the sole reason if I could, but another motive seems to me to have given force to all his admonitions and injunctions. He was anxious that there should be but one Cormenin, and the idea that people should talk of Cormenin, junior, and Cormenin, senior, did not suit him. He considered that the reflected light of his own reputation should be sufficient distinction for his son. It gratified his vanity to shine with an undivided light.

In 1849, when Louis came forward as a candidate at the Orleans election, his father's support would have ensured his success, for M. de Cormenin was then a factor no party could ignore. The father held back, and his son lost the election by several votes.

In the legislative assembly as in the domain of letters there was to be but one Cormenin. How embarrassing to have a Cormenin of Yonne and a Cormenin of the Loiret, a Cormenin of the Conseil d'Etat, and a Cormenin of the Assemblée! This confusion would have been intolerable, and was not to be thought of. Louis' political career and his literary career were both spoiled; he lived and died unknown to fame because he was the son of a celebrated father.

I may add that Louis never had so much as a crown piece from his father. Timon was rich, and Louis' own fortune would be considerable when certain reversions should fall in. But from the time of his leaving college until the death of his mother in 1853 he had to live upon an allowance of 1,200 francs made him by his grandfather. Under these circumstances it was impossible that he should derive any social advantage from the name he bore. He led the life of a poor student, took his place twice a day at his father's table, and avoided every expense. Alone with me he used to deplore his inferior position, but he never complained to those who should have taught him how to use the fortune he would ultimately inherit.

The idea of having to discuss any question of money with his father always gave Louis a sense of extreme discomfort. When I was in the East and he was about to start for his Italian journey with Théophile Gautier an incident occurred which seems scarcely credible.

Everything was ready, the places in the diligence booked, and the morning chosen for departure had actually arrived, when Louis said to Gautier, "You ought to come and pay my father a visit." Gautier consented, and they walked towards the Rue Chauveau-Lagarde, where M. de Cormenin lived. Louis was silent on his way to the house, but when they had climbed the staircase and Gautier had pulled the bell, he suddenly said, "Ask my father to let me go with you, and ask him to give me some money; I have not dared to do so." Gautier, who was not intrepid, felt disposed to run away. The interview was a courteous one, but there was a comic side to it.

Timon demurred, and exclaimed, "Who would ever have thought of such a thing?" However, if he was willing to disappoint his son he cared for Théophile Gautier's good opinion. Permission was given, and some money disbursed. Louis was able to undertake the journey, and he did not compromise the name of Cormenin.

Often I was so irritated by the kind of interdict old Timon had imposed upon Louis that I would reproach him for it, and on these occasions I did not spare him. In his calmest tones he would reply, "You are very violent, very violent," and he never yielded in the slightest degree. Louis dreaded a struggle. When I would entreat him to use his own name as he had the right to do, and blame him for not doing himself justice, he used to shrug his shoulders in a gentle, deprecating way, and say, "What would you have me do?"

To escape both from his father's inflexibility and from my impetuosity he took refuge with Gautier, who then asked, "Little cat, will you be good and

write my *feuilleton*? ” and poor Louis did for another the work he dared not attempt on his own account.

One day, in my anger, I said to Timon, “What do you mean to make of your son?” He replied, “I think the post of *Sous Prefet* would suit him.” I took up my hat and left the room.

I could not forgive M. de Cormenin his conduct towards his son, and on this account a coldness had arisen between us. We had no wish to avoid one another, but we did not seek each other’s society. After Louis’ death a change took place in our relations. One morning I heard a sound as of someone sobbing upon my stairs. I ran to open the door. The poor old man of seventy-eight, choked by emotion and with tears streaming down his face, fell into my arms. He exclaimed, “I have come that I may embrace the friend who loved my son so tenderly.”

Ever after that day I was humble and patient with him. Sometimes he would come to my rooms as if to some happy encounter. Then I was in the habit of denying myself to others, and we spoke together of his son. One day he remarked to me, “What a pity it was he did not care to work!” I was very near an outbreak, but I succeeded in restraining myself. Reproaches, recriminations! What purpose could they have served? Was not everything at an end?

When on the 6th May, 1868, M. de Cormenin died of a cancer in the liver at the age of eighty I stood beside his death-bed. Already unconscious, he lay upon his back, and his still handsome face and extended hands were cold and sallow. Each breath he drew came more gently until the last. Then for his son’s sake, whose spirit I felt near me, I gave him the parting kiss. His remains were taken to Joigny that he might rest with those who had borne his name.

When the funeral procession crossed the bridge which spans the river Yonne, accompanied by the

sound of chanting, I saw the house on my left in which Louis and I had played together as children, and where in the year 1851 I had come to celebrate his maternal grandfather's golden wedding. I felt a hand press mine, and Gasset, the old steward of the Chailleuse property, who had known us both when we were small, said to me through his tears, "Ah ! you at least have not forgotten him."

We did not mourn for Timon, but for Louis, that admirable being, so good and intelligent, and so little understood, who had departed too soon, and whom I long for now in my old age as I used to long for him in my youth. Never did I meet Théophile Gautier after his death but he said to me —

"I am glad to see you ; we will talk about poor Louis."

We are never alone when we follow one we love to the grave. Our dead who have gone before are there in spirit, and form a silent procession by our side. They join in our litany of regret, and remind us of all we have lost. Those we parted with long ago seem to die a second time. The newly-opened grave reopens many others which we had thought closed ; we follow our dear one in company with unseen presences, and we imagine we can hear the voices of the dead. Thus it is that even should the coffin, surrounded by lighted tapers, contain the remains of one we have never loved, our heart is oppressed, and our eyes grow dim when we hear the gloomy prayers of the Church. It is our own dead we remember, and our prayers are for them.

In the month of April, 1853, we followed the funeral of Louis de Cormenin's mother to the place where the prayers of the Church were to be said. Théophile Gautier clung to my arm and sobbed. I said to him thoughtlessly —

"Why are you so sad ? You never even saw her."

"I am thinking," he replied, "of my own mother."

The older we grow the stronger does this impres-



sion, which has all the reality and persistence of a bodily sensation, become. While we are young only two or three of these phantoms of the past appear; when we grow old we are surrounded by a crowd. Like Ulysses beside the trench full of blood, we are assailed by the Manes.

Among those who mourned for Louis de Cormenin none grieved more sincerely than Théophile Gautier. Not only did he deplore the loss of the companion of his travels, of his anonymous fellow-worker, and of an intelligent friend; he also lamented the waste of power, and knew that gifts which might have done good service to literature had not been utilized. Louis would have been a free-lance in literature. In spite of his apparently submissive nature he never lost his independence. He did not always express his opinion, but he adhered to it unswervingly. His path would have been traced out apart from either classicists or romanticists or realists, for he did not admit of schools in the region of art. He admired the beautiful everywhere without first requiring credential or hall-mark. If a man is thoroughly genuine, and does not seek only the plaudits of a literary clique or the appreciation of friends, that is well; art cannot be confined to a school, because expansion and development are of its very nature. The mechanical crafts may be learned, but the spirit of true art is an inherent quality, the result of special aptitudes, and not the product of manual skill or of dexterous arrangement. In his eyes the leaders of schools of literature and their disciples seemed narrow. "They are Popes or Grand Llamas," he would say; "imagine themselves infallible," and each little conventicle says, "Outside the Church no salvation is possible;" it is too puerile. Why, because a man admires the "*Voyages de Scarmentado*," should he despise the "*Discours sur l'histoire universelle*," or because he admires the "*Discours sur l'histoire universelle*" why should he feel contempt for the "*Voyages de Scarmentado*?" When he expressed himself before

Théophile Gautier to this effect, Gautier used to say —

“Like Marie de Neubourg, in reply to Ruy Blas, I can only assure you that I think your ideas gloriously true.”

Certainly Louis was right. His excellent common sense enabled him to accept a wider doctrine than that usually adopted by the literary sects. Any system which narrows the sphere of art, checks its expansion, prunes it down and encloses it in a formula, classical, romantic, realistic, idealist, naturalistic, it matters not which, lowers the standard of art and gives it a hieratic character which may be interesting, but which is sure, with time, to become intolerable. Art lives by diffusion. To restrict it to rule is to stifle it and reduce it to the condition of those plants bred in close rooms, which make a fair show, but are without scent or colour. The strongest arguments are of no avail; we may invoke the traditions of the past and affirm the duty of copying nature, but personal initiative is supreme. In art, in religion, and in everything liberty is the only living, fertilizing force.

Théophile Gautier, who in this respect as in many others had a kind of godlike breadth of view, was wont to say, “We should exaggerate the faults of our style until they become merits, that is the secret of true talent.” He was the first to smile at young writers who cramp their ideas and stifle them with theory. An anecdote he related in this connection shows the pass the spirit of intolerance had reached. When it was noised abroad that Victor Hugo intended that “*Lucrèce Borgia*,” a prose drama, should be represented on the stage, the whole tribe of the romanticists was in an uproar. What! Talk prose like the most vulgar *bourgeois*! Devil take it! Such a thing was not to be endured. A meeting was held in the studio of Eugène Devéria; there was much speechifying and discussion. Finally it was decided to send a deputation to the master, who went by the title of Pontifex

Maximus, which should inform him without any figures of speech that he was bound to present himself upon the stage only in verse, or else to lay aside his wreath as chief of the romantic school. Did he decide upon the latter alternative the wreath would be placed upon the less august brows of some author who had never stooped to write dramatic prose.

Victor Hugo received the deputation which bore this ultimatum, and knew how to preserve his equanimity. He was clever enough to be able to talk over his rebellious subjects, and proved to them that it was the duty of romanticism to remodel prose style precisely as it had already broken the old mould of Alexandrine verse.

The disaffected were pacified, and the whole Romanticist band once more fell into order and continued to obey its chief.

"But," I inquired of Gautier, "supposing Hugo had sent you about your business as he ought to have done, what course could you then have adopted?"

He burst out laughing, and replied —

"We were such fools that we were capable of proclaiming Petrus Borel in his place." Afterwards he added, "It is allowable to adhere to a rule and a principle oneself, but madness to try to impose it upon others."

Montaigne has said —

"After all, we set our opinion too high when we are ready to roast a man alive for not being of one mind with us."

Nowadays, thank Heaven! no one is roasted alive! But literary intolerance is ready to condemn, without extenuating circumstances, all who will not follow in the same path, I was going to say in the same rut, and carries out the work of the inquisition to the degree permitted by the spirit of our age.

At the representation of "Hernani," the Prince of Wurtemberg stood up on a seat and cried out "A là lanterne," when he saw a member of the French Academy enter the theatre.

He was as foolish as those academicians who threw themselves at the feet of Charles X., and begged him to forbid the representation of any work produced by the romantic school of literature.

The King gave proof of his good sense. "Gentlemen," he replied, "on such occasions I have only my place in the *parterre*."

Those who contended over these questions with a violence they seemed to have borrowed from the amenities of party warfare have sunk their differences in the oblivion which envelops them like a cloud and hides their names, even, from us. I fear a like fate for the cavillers of our own day, for those who are most scandalized, as well as for those who complain of persecution. A little modesty and a large amount of toleration would surely not be unbecoming to the combatants.

It is true that a book may revolutionize the world of thought, but it is unwise to assume that because one has written a book he has made a revolution. Mme. Cottin had stirred the heart and the imagination of her readers at the end of the last century. If she chanced to go to a ball people used to get up on seats to look at her; they pointed her out to one another, whispered "It is she," and were much affected. She would try to escape from them, and knew not where to go to avoid an ovation.

I have heard my grandmother relate that one evening a young man, who afterwards rose to the rank of general, threw himself at her feet and fainted.

There is a great deal in fashion. We find the book of the day at the circulating library just as we find the dish of the day at the restaurant. To-day the sauce pleases the epicure; to-morrow it will be "arlequin." \*

\* "Arlequin" is the term used in France for the remains of cooked food which are taken from the restaurants to the "halles" or market places, and sold there cheap to poor people.—TRANS.

People once fought for possession of Paul de Kock's volume, and there was a time when they wept night after night over the misfortunes of the Vicomte d'Arlincourt's heroines. Like gardeners' annuals, these works seem to grow and bloom with all the more vigour because they will soon die and disappear. The first frost is certain to kill them, they will be thrown upon the manure heap, and will feed the roots of the tiny oak and the beech-tree they had overgrown.

One style in literature is admired, applauded, and given the highest place; then, with as little reason apparently, it becomes extinct, and no one has a word to say about it. Suddenly, under what influence we know not, it revives and comes back to life as if the spirit of dead authors took up the labours of the past and clothed the old ideas in a new form. In spite of Balzac's "Paysans" are we quite sure that "Estelle et Némorin" will never reappear?

Who can say that a new cut-throat author\* in love with the sweet scent of the meadows will not breathe a sigh once more and sing us —

"Il pleut, il pleut, bergère?"

The fact that a style in art or in literature has once existed is a proof that it may exist again. Have not the books of Restif de la Bretonne been resuscitated? Well, so much the better for those who can appreciate them. In a little while the Chevalier de la Morlière should begin to mend his pen. In his day they called it "a quill torn from love's wing." The truth is it was only a goose's quill, and we need not believe them.

\* Some of the most blood-thirsty among those who inaugurated the Reign of Terror were fond of a sentimental style in literature, which was the fashion of the day; pastorals, idylls, &c., were much appreciated.—TRANS.

## CHAPTER XIII.

LOUIS BOUILHET.

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT felt Louis de Cormenin's death keenly. He had not fathomed his nature, but he had appreciated him, and he divined that he possessed intellectual gifts of a high order. Flaubert left Croisset when the news reached him, and came to spend a few days with me, that he might help me to bear the early effects of the blow I had received. He was very busy, engaged upon two works at the same time, a fact which surprised me, for his mind needed to concentrate itself upon a subject in a way peculiarly its own, otherwise no happy result could be expected. He was writing a novel which was to embody the political and social science of our time; it was to be called "*l'Education Sentimentale*," like one of his earliest productions, with the additional title "*Histoire d'un jeune Homme*." Notwithstanding the labour this work entailed, because it compelled him to read much contemporary literature, both books and newspapers, he had conceived the idea of writing a fairy piece, "*le Chateau des cœurs*," which is a very strange production. Flaubert imagined that nothing could equal the comic element in this play, and it had taken complete hold of him. He talked of nothing else, and described the scenes of the "*Féerie*" to me and all its mechanical transformations, but he could not convince me that he was not losing his time. Instead of the ordinary old-fashioned methods of producing stage illusion,

instead of tables changed into arm-chairs, and beds into sailing-boats, he had invented a new system which must have for ever prohibited any management from attempting to put the piece upon the stage. Such an undertaking would have meant ruin. If any material object were described or referred to in the dialogue, that object was to take form at once before the spectators' eyes. For instance, a father in search of his son finds him in a *café*, drinking and smoking. In his anger he tells him he is "only one of the pillars of a tavern."

Suddenly the young man is turned into a pillar, and forms one of the supports of the doorway. In itself the idea was ingenious, but it was contrary to all the traditions of the stage. The dialogue in these kind of pantomimic representations is usually subordinated to the requirements of the scenic effects, and an innovation of this description would have been inadmissible, owing to the heavy expense it must necessarily have entailed.

Flaubert was not capable of bringing out a play by his own unaided efforts; he did not understand how to sacrifice the literary developments in which he excelled to the requirements of the drama. He was aware that such things as dramatic harmony and dramatic propriety existed; a strange art, too, the art of proportion and of combination, had been spoken of in his presence. One of his friends, whose plays had been fairly successful at the Vaudeville and Variétés Theatres, had actually said —

"I will undertake to prove to anyone who cares to hear me do it that Shakespeare did not know how to write a play."

He knew that in order to produce certain situations the characters of the piece must be brought upon the scene by means of what are technically and correctly called *ficelles* (strings). Unfortunately he was not acquainted with this art; did not "know the ropes," to use the language of modern slang. Therefore he applied to Comte X—, a friend of his, whose plays had been well received.

Another difficulty arose from the circumstance that in a "*féerie*," couplets, as they were formerly called, are an indispensable adjunct.

Now I have already stated that Flaubert was incapable of producing even a line in the Alexandrine measure. Whenever he had attempted poetry he had produced harmonious prose rather than verse. A poet was another requisite, and he naturally turned to Louis Bouilhet. The three friends set to work, but only Flaubert was enthusiastic; Bouilhet's thoughts were elsewhere, and Comte X— tried to run away whenever he saw an opportunity. However, when the question was a literary one, Flaubert was not to be trifled with, and he treated his collaborating friends somewhat cavalierly. He summoned them to their labours as to a stage rehearsal, and was annoyed if they arrived late. Bouilhet was tolerably obedient, and kept his appointments. But Comte X—, who did not feel attracted by the kind of occupation, invented all sorts of subterfuges to obtain exemption. One day he appeared with a handkerchief bound round his head and with a bundle of cotton-wool pressed to his cheek. He groaned as with the pain of a raging tooth-ache which had quite worn out his strength. Flaubert was partly exasperated and partly touched by the sight of his sufferings. He accepted the excuse, and gave Comte X— leave to depart. The latter did not wait to hear more; he went away, but as soon as he was well outside the door he took the handkerchief off his head and went for a walk. It was a transformation scene, as they would have said of the pantomime. Devotion to work was a sort of infatuation with Flaubert, and he tried to impose it upon others with an insistence which was a proof of the complete dominion it exercised over his own life. He would have been capable of shutting up a collaborator and of keeping him under lock and key until his work should be completed, for if he did not spare himself neither did he spare others.



Louis Bouilhet was too much absorbed in his own ideas to be subjugated by this influence. He was present in the body, but not in the spirit; would appear to listen to Flaubert, while in reality he was wandering in the world of dreams in search of some high-sounding measure. Apart from this pantomime in which he participated so half-heartedly, he also was engaged upon two works; one of them was the usual drama in verse, and the other a Chinese tale, the plot of which had haunted him for some time, indeed, ever since he had finished his poem "Melænis." He had already reached an age when the memory retains words with greater difficulty than in youth, but he had set himself to study Chinese.

Did he desire to study the history or the manners of the Celestial Empire? No! His object was to discover new rhymes, and above all new imagery. One of his friends said to him with a smile —

"Surely to go all that way, to the land of the yellow race, for butterflies is rather an effort."

Bouilhet thought the joke a little severe. He devoted himself especially to the poets, and sought inspiration from them. Sometimes he borrowed their changes of measure, and studied a rhythm unknown to us, and which is not without originality.

"La révolte, de sang et de larmes suivie,  
A brisé du talon le pouvoir qu'on envie,  
Et Yang Té, fils du ciel, en cette nuit d'horreur  
Gît au pied de son brône, un couteau dans le cœur.  
Son héritier qu'attend une même agonie,  
Prend un flacon fatal dont nul ne se méfie,  
Le vide et dit tourné vers le dieu Fô : Seigneur !  
Fais que dans les hasards d'une seconde vie  
Je ne renaisse pas, au corps d'un empereur !"

Louis Bouilhet's talent had been recognized by the public; his plays were brilliantly successful at the Odéon. "Hélène Peyron" was warmly applauded, and the "Conjuration d'Amboise" had a run of more than one hundred nights.

The doors of the Comédie-Française opened more

reluctantly; there he was less fortunate, and his play of "Dolorès" met with a cold reception.

After he left Rouen he led a rather unsettled existence, and he left Paris, which was too exciting to please him. Finally he took refuge at Mantes, and lived at that place for several years, more happily, perhaps, than in any other. His home there was dear to him, and he was at a distance from certain aggressive and exacting claims which had assailed him in his former life. He could dispose of his time, and work at his own hours free from restraint in the calm atmosphere he preferred. Without ambition, he would willingly have stayed in the retreat he had chosen.

The town of Rouen sought him out and gave him the post of librarian—an easy occupation, well suited to him. It would enable him, he thought, still to dream of the personages who moved in his dramas, and to seek for new combinations in rhyme, yet to overlook the work of his subordinates and attend to the loan of books, etc., so he imagined. But he began to think of new classifications, of cataloguing, of logical arrangement, and he gave to the library the time he should have given to poetry. Flaubert was indignant, and did not spare him. "You were put there to write verses, and not to arrange a set of old books. A serious alteration, of which he was unconscious, and which escaped Flaubert's notice, was taking place in Bouilhet's health.

He became melancholy without any definite cause, for he was now relieved from money anxieties; he slept badly, suffered from perpetual thirst, and worked hardly at all. For hours he would sit in his arm-chair, his head thrown back, and his eyes gazing into space as if he were lost in some dream others could not follow or understand.

In the beginning of the summer of the year 1869 he grew weaker and complained of vague pains, the precise situation of which he knew not how to describe. The doctors who examined him declared that organic disease existed, and sent him to Vichy,

where he did not long remain, for Dr. Willemin, who also examined him, advised his immediate return to Rouen. Here he arrived much depressed, his walking powers impeded by swelling of the legs. He called in Dr. Achille Flaubert, who pronounced his case serious, so serious that recovery was extremely doubtful.

The poor poet had sung his last strophe. Perhaps he remembered a passage in the writings of Marcus Aurelius, which he had given me to read when I lost Louis de Cormenin, "Death puts an end to the agitations the senses impart to the soul, to the violent shocks it receives from its passions, and in general to the puppet-like condition it is reduced to by the vagaries of thought and the tyranny of the flesh."

He died on the 19th July, 1869, having just entered his forty-eighth year. I was not in France at the time, but four days later I received the following letter from Gustave Flaubert :—

"MY DEAR OLD MAX,

"I feel I must write you a long letter. I know not if I shall have the strength, but I will try. From the time of his return to Rouen after his nomination to the post of librarian our poor friend, Bouilhet, was firmly convinced that he had come there to die. Everybody joked him, I as well as the others, on account of his low spirits. He was like a different man, so completely was he changed; the literary sense alone remained unimpaired. In short, when I returned here from Paris early in June I was shocked by his appearance.

"A journey to Paris he undertook—because the manager of the Odéon Theatre wanted him to make sundry changes in the second act of 'Mademoiselle Aïssé'—tired him so much that he was only just able to drag himself from the railway station to the theatre. On the last Sunday in June when I called upon him I found Dr. P—, of Paris, with him, X—, of Rouen, Morel, the brain specialist, and a worthy

friend of his called Dupré, a chemist. Bouilhet was afraid to ask my brother to meet the other doctors in consultation. He felt extremely ill, and dreaded hearing the truth. P— had sent him to Vichy, but Willemin quickly despatched him back to Rouen. Then, at last, he sent for my brother. The mischief was irreparable, as, indeed, Willemin had already stated.

“During the last fortnight of his life my mother was on a visit to the V— ladies, and the letters were delayed three weeks, so you may imagine what anxiety I endured. Every two days I went to see Bouilhet, and there seemed some improvement. His appetite and spirits were good, and the swelling of the legs decreased. His sisters came over from Cany to see him, and treated him to scenes about religion which even scandalized a worthy canon of the cathedral.

“Our poor Bouilhet behaved splendidly, and sent them about their business.

“When I left him on Saturday for the last time he had a volume of Lamettrie beside him on the night-table, and reminded me of poor Alfred Le Poitevin reading ‘Spinoza.’ No priest was allowed to set foot in the house. The anger his sisters had excited seemed to have a sustaining effect upon him all through Saturday, and I left for Paris in the hope that he would live a long time.

“At five o’clock on Sunday morning he began to be delirious, and to compose aloud the plot of a mediæval drama about the Inquisition. It filled him with enthusiasm, and he called for me that he might explain it all to me. Suddenly he was taken with a shivering fit, murmured ‘Adieu ! adieu !’ buried his head in Léonie’s neck, and passed away peacefully.

“On Monday morning the porter woke me up to give me a message, which announced the event in telegraphic style. I was quite alone ; I put my things together for the journey, sent you the news, and went to break it to Duplan, who was in the midst of his business.

"Then I wandered about until one o'clock. It was hot in the streets round about the railway station. I had to travel from Paris to Rouen in a compartment full of people. Opposite me was a damsel who smoked cigarettes, put up her feet on the seat, and sang songs. When I saw the church towers of Mantes I felt as if I should go mad—I believe I was very nearly mad. Seeing how pale I was, the damsel offered me some eau de Cologne, which revived me. But I cannot tell you the state of thirst I endured. The desert of Qôseir was nothing to it. At last I arrived at the house in the Rue Le Bihorel. I spare you here the painful details.

"Never did I know a better hearted fellow than that little Philippe. He and the excellent Léonie nursed Bouilhet admirably. I consider that their conduct became them. To reassure him as to his state, to convince him that he was not dangerously ill, she refused to allow him to marry her, and her son backed up her resistance. Bouilhet was so much in earnest that he had sent for all his papers. I think that, in the young man especially, such behaviour showed gentlemanly feeling.

"Osmoy and I arranged the funeral, which was very largely attended. At least two thousand persons were present!—the Prefect, the Procureur-Général, and all sorts and conditions of men.\* Well, you will scarcely credit me when I tell you that I was perfectly conscious of the grotesque side of the ceremony as I followed his coffin.

"I seemed to hear him make his remarks upon everything. I felt his presence near me as if we were walking side by side in some other funeral ceremony.

\* The French expression is "Toutes les herbes de la Saint-Jean." It means a mixed assembly of people of different ranks and denomination who do not usually meet in the same society. A friend informs me that in some countries girls are in the habit of putting a number of herbs of different kinds under their pillow on St. John's Eve in order that they may dream of their future husbands. Doubtless this is the origin of the saying.

"The heat was frightful, and there was a storm brewing. I was bathed in perspiration, and the ascent to the monumental portion of the cemetery exhausted me completely. His friend Caudron had chosen a plot of ground for him quite near to Père Flaubert's grave. I leant against a balustrade to recover my breath.

"The coffin was placed upon trestles close to the trench. The speeches, three in number, were about to begin. Then I broke down, and was led away by my brother and by some stranger. On the following day I fetched my mother away from Serquigny. Yesterday I went to Rouen to take possession of his papers. To-day I have read all the letters I have received. There! Oh! my dear Max! It is hard to bear! He leaves Léonie . . . by will. All his books and papers are to belong to Philip.

"He charges him to take counsel of four friends, you, Osmoy, Caudron, and myself, with respect to his unpublished writings. He leaves a volume of valuable poems, four prose compositions, and 'Mademoiselle Aïssé.'

"The manager of the Odéon does not like the second act, and I do not know what he will decide. You must come here this winter with Osmoy, and we must determine what to publish.

"My head is too painful, I can write no more. Besides, what more is there to say?

"Farewell! I embrace you with all my heart, now you are the only one left. Do you remember when we wrote to one another '*Solus ad Solum*?' "

P.S.—This sentence occurs in every letter I have received, "We must close the ranks." One gentleman I did not know sent me his card with the two words "*sunt lacrymæ*" written upon it.

The Léonie referred to in Flaubert's letter was a good and devoted woman who for twenty-one years had been Bouilhet's constant companion. Always ready to serve him, she yet respected his work too much to disturb him, and rendered his life less lonely by her presence. She had had one

son whom Bouilhet brought up and placed out in the world as if he had been his own.

Léonie and Philippe were both admirable in their affection. Their unselfishness stood the severest tests. They gave a striking proof of their devotion when they refused the marriage which had been their dream for so long, in order that Bouilhet should not know that he was "in articulo mortis."

The little council which was to have discussed Bouilhet's posthumous writings and decide which of them to publish never met. Flaubert chose as he thought fit, and would not listen when we told him that the title he gave the poems, "*Dernières Chansons*," was too ambiguous, would lead to misunderstanding, and diminish the success of the book.

When Flaubert was possessed by an idea his project would assume absolute mastery over him.

We knew that objections were useless, so we spared ourselves trouble and him an attack of irritation. We did not attempt to oppose him. He had no sense of proportion, and his natural tendency to exaggeration when stimulated by friendship led him so far astray that he imagined Bouilhet the greatest poet of the nineteenth century. If he had only said it to me that would have mattered little, but he said it to others, and Bouilhet's reputation suffered in consequence.

At a full dress rehearsal of "*Hélène Peyron*," I heard him exclaim, "That is finer than *Æschylus*."

Clogenson, an old friend of his, who had come from Rouen in order to be present, said to him —

"Do not repeat what you have just stated at the first representation, or you will injure Bouilhet's memory."

Flaubert was perfectly sincere, and his own opinion seemed to go to his head and to carry him away completely.

Almost immediately after Bouilhet's decease he wanted to have a statue erected to his memory and placed in one of the public squares of Rouen.

He never reflected that a statue at Rouen meant a pendant to that of Corneille. A subscription was opened, and the sum collected was sufficient for a bust and a pedestal. With some difficulty Flaubert obtained permission to place the memorial near the Public Library.\*

The Municipality of Rouen showed no enthusiasm, and Flaubert could not restrain himself, and addressed that body in a pamphlet which was not specially remarkable for the amenity of its style. In principle he was right, but he was wrong to express himself as he did.

When a municipal council, which included among its members a rhymster who had perpetrated verses the merest tyro would have disowned, cast doubt upon Bouilhet's literary merit, it was natural that he should feel irritated. Only a little more moderation of tone would have been preferable.

This piece of slashing criticism contains one paragraph which should be remembered —

“The French nobility came to grief because for two centuries its sentiments were those of flunkeydom. The *bourgeoisie's* end is at hand because its sentiments are on a level with those of the common people. I am unable to perceive that its members read other newspapers, appreciate different music, or enjoy higher pleasures, among them, as among the crowd I find the same love of money, the same worship of success, a similar iconoclasm and hatred of every kind of superiority, the same spirit of detraction, the same crass ignorance.”†

Bouilhet was a remarkably intelligent man, of profound learning and honourable character, a free-thinker, gentle, witty, and kindly. I had a sincere

\* The bust of Louis Bouilhet was unveiled at Rouen on the 24th August, 1882. The monument dedicated to the memory of Gustave Flaubert was placed near it in the year 1890.

† Lettre de M. Gustave Flaubert à la Municipalité de Rouen au sujet d'un vote concernant Louis Bouilhet, brochure de 20 pages in 8vo, 1872.



affection for him, and I greatly admired his gifts, but he did not possess the genius which would have entitled him to take rank among the great poets.

He is the best of the minor poets; some of his poems will live and a place will be found for them in all books of selections. "*Melænis*" is a remarkably fine work of wide scope, conducted throughout with skill, and written in noble verse, but I am of opinion that Bouilhet should walk behind Alfred de Musset, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, Victor de Laprade, Auguste Barbier, and Théophile Gautier in the procession of the poets.

I do not mean to imply that his position is not an exceptional one. On the contrary, I regard him as most enviable, and if he did not reach the loftiest regions, it was, I imagine, due to a sort of contradiction in himself of which he was unconscious. The natural bent of his mind, his training, ideas, knowledge, and imagination were altogether classical. He had dreamt for some time of writing a poem in Latin verse.

Afterwards he forced himself to adopt the romantic style, so that all his life he was drawn in different directions, and it is a proof of his intellectual power that he was able to steer his course amid the cross-currents. The best verses he wrote are classical in form, and recall the style of the 17th century—the Doric Order, as we may call it, of literature, in which French cultivated thought won such high honours. Whenever he was tempted to write in the romantic style, ballads, fantastic poems or *danses Macabres*, he failed, was aware of the fact, and put all such productions back in his drawer.

His poem, "*Les Fossiles*," in spite of its power and originality, would have been no discordant note among the works of the 18th century.

I have already said that the influence he exercised over Flaubert was productive in its results, but Flaubert's influence upon Bouilhet was not equally beneficial. Flaubert was too extreme, his admira-

tion was so uncritical and impetuous that it carried Bouilhet off his feet. Each organism bears within it the germ of the disease which is to destroy it. The same may be affirmed of moral and intellectual qualities, the leaven which will decompose them is always present within. Flaubert and Bouilhet fell into the same error. They lived too long and too much together, reflected in each other's minds. They inhabited an artificial world of their own, engaged in the contemplation of each other's minds, reproduced their own thoughts, and excluded others from their ideal universe.

Absorbed in mutual admiration, they dwelt apart in a kind of intellectual isolation, which meant the perpetual consideration and discussion of their own writings. When Flaubert had read him a passage from one of his books, Bouilhet replied by declaiming some verses he had just produced. Each sang the praises of the other, and played in turn the part of priest or of divinity. They should have mixed more freely with the world at large—they lived too much in a set, I had almost said in a *coterie*. They regarded all human affairs from the artistic or literary point of view. If they were required to interest themselves in any subject they invariably asked, "How does it affect literature?"

Too self-centred, they were consequently wanting in sympathy. They grew indifferent to the larger human interests; all they found to admire in antiquity, in the middle ages, in the renaissance, and in modern times was what they called form—that is to say, the surface of things.

Meaning and subject were contemptible, fit only for the *bourgeois*. When they went into society they expected to lead the conversation, and did not listen to others. I believe that it is bad for an artist or literary man, whatever his line or his ability, to live exclusively in the society of other artists or literary men. Mutual admiration societies are unintentionally formed in this way. In their atmosphere the best natural gifts become enervated; sated with

praise, men so surrounded are not stimulated to fresh effort.

It is like shutting a bird into a cage and condemning it to sing the same song. Just as it is good to visit different countries and to compare the different races, so it is well to change our intellectual environment, even if we descend to a lower level. We visit and explore other minds, the humblest intellect has its point of light, and when we study the ideas of those we come across our own are corrected, enlarged, and improved.

A conversation with a sailor, a soldier, a peasant, or, as Flaubert would have said, with a *bourgeois*, is an opportunity for learning something hitherto unknown.

"He will take each man's measure," says Montaigne, "the bullock-driver's or the mason's, or that of the passing stranger, each of them he will apply to and borrow something of his wares."

Every blade of grass has its own perfume, but to gather its sweetness we must walk in the midst of the pasture, and not stand upon a hill, gaze only at the sun, and turning our back upon the common world.

Neither Flaubert nor Bouilhet had the advantage in their young days, between the ages of twenty and thirty, of being tossed and tumbled in the rough sea of human life. This was due in Flaubert's case to his state of health, in Bouilhet's to his poverty, and they never acquired the ease of movement which contact with their fellows in the outer world would have imparted. I always deplored it, for great as their powers were, the character of their genius was conventual, with something of the breath of the cell about it, and left one with the impression that it clung by preference to the cloister.

Is this the reason why sentiment, that fairest of poetic flowers, is absent from Bouilhet's works? Love has no place in "*Melænis*" or in the shorter poems. Desire and passion are not the same as love. When woman is only an instrument of

pleasure she becomes a source of weariness and of degradation. We must know what it is to love in this life, I mean in the sense of suffering for it; we must have experienced the delight of self-sacrifice.

It is a delusion to believe with Chamfort that love is only the physical contact of two beings mutually attracted. The one poetic cry which stirs each heart and wakes men from their apathy is the cry of love.

It was a constant surprise to me that in all Alfred de Musset's writings the passage both Flaubert and Bouilhet specially admired was the passage about the mare in "Rolla." I admit that it is extremely fine, but the form only is admirable.

The truth is they were carried away by their horror of the commonplace.

Love is a commonplace of sentiment, doubtless, so in conversation they always derided it, perhaps because they had never experienced it. They wished to devote themselves exclusively to art; therefore they claimed from life neither the best nor the worst it has to give, and were lacking in one of the most fruitful sources of artistic inspiration. When everything has crumbled into ruin around us, when we have realized the vanity of human ambition, lost faith in ourselves, recognized the uncertainty of all things, and the certainty of disillusion, then if we look back upon the past and count the dead fallen by the way, one form only still lives and stirs and smiles upon us.

"C'est toi qui dors dans l'ombre, O sacré souvenir!"

Victor Hugo, in his "Tristesse d'Olympio," has expressed the sentiment in lines which of themselves would have rendered him immortal.

Bouilhet had no such memory; in his hour of darkness he could never borrow from the past the courage and vitality which had failed him in the present. Those only among the poets who understood love were great. It matters little who inspired the love, Ninotte or Semiramis; not the

object of the affection, but the sentiment interests us, because it is a vitalizing force, and makes a man "the equal of the gods."

Late in the day, too late, Bouilhet learnt this lesson. In the evening of his life he put his finger upon the weak spot, probed the wound, took counsel with his vanished dreams, and asked himself the question why his wings had not borne him over the summits he had beheld in early youth. An inward voice replied, and inspired Bouilhet with the beautiful verses I shall quote here, for they contain an explanation as well as a confession :—

"Toute ma lampe a brûlé goutte à goutte  
Mon feu s'éteint avec un dernier bruit ;  
Sans un ami, sans un chien qui m'écoute,  
Je pleure seul dans la profonde nuit.

"Derrière moi,—si je tournais la tête  
Je le verrais,—un fantôme est placé ;  
Témoin fatal apparu dans ma fête,  
Spectre en lambeaux de mon bonheur passé.

"Mon rêve est mort sans espoir qu'il renaisse ;  
Le temps m'échappe, et l'orgueil imposteur  
Pousse au néant les jours de ma jeunesse,  
Comme un troupeau dont il fut le pasteur.

"Pareil au flux d'une mer inféconde,  
Sur mon cadavre au sépulcre endormi,  
Je sens déjà monter l'oubli du monde  
Qui tout vivant m'a converti à demi.

"Oh, La nuit froide ! Oh, La nuit douloureuse !  
Ma main bondit sur mon sein palpitant ;  
Qui frappe ainsi dans ma poitrine creuse,  
Quels sont ces coups sinistres qu'on entend ?

"Qu'es-tu ? Qu'es-tu ? Parle, ô monstre indomptable,  
Qui te débats en mes flancs enfermé ?  
Une voix dil, une voix lamentable ;  
Je suis ton cœur et je n'ai pas aimé."

The avowal is complete. Flaubert might also have put his signature to these verses. Emma Bovary's disordered fancies, the erotic dreams of Salambô are no more love than are the passionate ecstasies of Melænis.

Perfect in friendship, these two pure natures were

capable of love, but had never experienced it. Not content with that, they fled from its approaches, combated all signs of it in others, and mocked at it as if at some ridiculous deformity.

One of our friends in a time of ecstatic love and happiness, asked Bouilhet to give him an appropriate motto. He borrowed a line from the "Curculio" of Plautus —

"Bonum 'st pauxillum amare sane, insane non bonum 'st."

One woman loved Flaubert, silently, but passionately. It chanced that Théophile Gautier witnessed a painful scene between them. He said to Flaubert—

"Why do you treat that poor creature in such an unfeeling way?"

Flaubert replied, "She might want to come into my study."

Nobody was allowed to enter his study.

His manner with women was, as a rule, charmingly gentle; he treated them somewhat like children, and as long as they would leave him in peace thought them delightful.

Since his death several persons have written to ask me if he ever was in love; "you only can know," they add. I decline to answer the question, for he has answered it himself. A memory, an illusory sentiment he believed himself to have experienced had once crossed his life, and he fancied that he had paid the tribute due to love. Fate and he were quits according to his view of the case, and he asked nothing more of it.

In the year 1838, when he was sixteen and a half, he spent his holidays at Trouville with his family, who owned a fairly large property in the place. Trouville was not then what it is now. There were no roads cut through the woods, no big hotels nor quaint villas. Music, dandies and ladies of the *demi-monde* in furbelows had not yet made their appearance. It was a pretty little town composed of fishermen's cottages, situated on the banks of the river Touques, and near to its fine beach. There

were two or three inns in which the artists took up their quarters. No fine toilets were to be seen, only serge jackets, striped petticoats, and straw hats.

The diligence did not bring a great many people, and the Parisians had not discovered the place. It was charming, like a marine oasis, as I remember it. Rest and perfect freedom could then be enjoyed there. A few years ago I revisited Trouville. I ran away from it as quickly as possible, and have no intention of returning. Flaubert went out fishing with the sailors and their nets, swam about like a triton, scampered bare-footed over the wet sands, and disposed of his superabundant spirits by shouting the poems of Victor Hugo to the advancing waves of the tide.

He met there, or perhaps it would be more correct to say he just perceived, a young woman of twenty-eight, for she was born in the year 1810. He saw, admired her, and aspired, as he expressed it. She was pretty and likewise uncommon. Her glossy blue black hair was arranged in bands which overshadowed her cheek, and set off the clear amber tint of her complexion, the mouth was smiling, but the expression of the eyes sad. The eyes themselves were large and very dark, whereas the teeth were of dazzling whiteness. A slight mark over the upper lip had almost the effect of a moustache. On her head she wore an immense straw hat, which fell down over and rested upon her well-modelled shoulders, which could be seen through the transparent texture of her muslin dress. She was always accompanied by a large Newfoundland dog called Nero. Flaubert did not dare to speak to her, but he would walk past her and colour when he looked at her. If he could get possession of the dog he would caress it and tell it all about the love its mistress had inspired in such terms that had the poor bow-wow been able to understand it would certainly have begun to bark.

Flaubert's admiration for this unknown lady was not a platonic sentiment such as is usually awakened

in an inexperienced nature. Unknown she did not long remain, for she had a husband who was by no means difficult of access. He was a brewer by trade, with a great many irons in the fire, carried on the affairs of a large business in Paris, was always ready to enjoy himself, and deserted his wife to run after the first petticoat he might have seen turn the street corner. He was well versed in every form of advertisement, would throw gold pieces out of the window, and stoop to pick up a halfpenny. Flaubert conceived a kind of admiration for him, and would listen open-mouthed to the recital of his conquests. He was allowed to become intimate with the couple, and continued to gaze at the wife without going any farther.

In the summers of 1839 and 1840 he returned to Trouville and tried to find them, but they were not there. Later on he discovered them in Paris, continued to admire the husband, continued to gaze at the wife, and persisted in keeping silence. That was the grand love affair which had "ravaged his heart" according to his own account.

In the "Education Sentimentale," not the one we had heard him read in 1845, but the one he published in 1870, he told the story of his love. To no book he wrote did he devote so much time and labour as to these two volumes. In this novel he purposely brought together such a number of characters that he had the greatest difficulty to set them all in motion. He related here the story of a part, or, as he used to say, of a section of his life. I could give the real names of every character in the book, for I knew or had come across all of them, from the Maréchale to Vatnaz, from Frédéric, who was Flaubert himself, to Mdme. Arnoux, the unknown lady of Trouville, who in the novel appeared with a different setting.

The manuscript of this novel was the last of his that Flaubert showed me. The remarks I had submitted to him with respect to "Madame Bovary" and "Salambô" referred to questions of



detail only, for Bouilhet had revised them carefully. But now it was otherwise, and at the close of the year 1869, when this novel, "*l'Education Sentimentale*," was finished and copied out, I engaged in a discussion over it with Flaubert, which lasted three weeks. I breakfasted with him, he dined with me, and sometimes we spent fourteen or fifteen consecutive hours fighting over different questions; some days I was quite worn out. I laugh now when I think of these discussions. Like Vadius and Trissotin we exchanged a good many plain truths, but without wounding one another. What waste of time it was, and how utterly useless it is to argue about the things of the mind! The disputants soon cease to understand one another.

When Flaubert brought me "*l'Education Sentimentale*" I had long been cured of a taste for literary discussion. But for him what would I not have done!

In vain he rebelled, became angry, called me Lhomond, Boiste, Noël et Chapsal, an usher, and a grammarian gone astray. He would laugh till the tears were in his eyes when I exclaimed, "In the name of fame, respect the rule of the possessive case."

He always upheld the theory that a writer is bound to accept the rules of grammar which govern the French language only in so far as they meet the requirements of his style, and that by the laws of harmony alone should he be restrained.

For instance, he would not have hesitated to write, "*Je voudraisque vous alliez*" ("I wish you would go"), instead of "*Je voudrais que vous allassiez*," because the imperfect tense of the subjunctive is less euphonious. However, George Sand was of the same mind. Such points led us into endless controversies.

One evening we had worked—that was Flaubert's expression—until one o'clock in the morning. I had gone to bed, but at about three was awoke by a fearful noise of someone singing and kicking at

my door. I rose in much alarm, and went to open it. There on the threshold stood Flaubert. Directly he saw me he exclaimed, "Yes, old pedagogue, the agreement of the cases is an absurdity; I have the right to say it. 'Je voudrais que la grammaire soit à tous les diables et non pas fût.'\* Do you hear me?"

Then he ran downstairs without waiting for my answer.

He always said that style and grammar were two different things, and quoted the great writers, who were almost all incorrect. He pointed out that no grammarian ever knew how to write. I was in perfect agreement with him on this subject, for numerous examples proved the truth of his statement.

I know of more than twenty people who saw "l'Education Sentimentale" in manuscript. Flaubert was not always particular in his choice of readers. There was very little difference of opinion among the persons he consulted, and perhaps he was right not to set too much store by them. I do not think he wished for criticism, although I believed during some considerable time that this was his object. It was a necessity with him to show what he had written to others. He was so possessed by his idea that it seemed to relieve him of a portion of his burden to call others round him to consider it with him. When a friend paid him a visit, after a few minutes of a conversation which he purposely allowed to languish, he would take up the last pages he had written, just as they were, with their erasures and corrections, and read them aloud. To each word he gave a peculiar intonation, as if to accentuate the meaning and swell the sound.

This strange weakness in a man of such ability always astonished me. He had acquired the habit when living at Croisset, in his long *tête-à-tête* inter-

\* Literally, "I wish grammar were (soit) with all the devils," and not "fût;" "fût," and not "soit," would be correct, according to grammatical rule.—TRANS.

views with Bouilhet. The explanation I have given above is the only credible one—he was full to overflowing with his own subject.

“*l'Éducation Sentimentale*” was published, and not so favourably received as “*Madame Bovary*” and “*Salambô*.” This annoyed and astounded Flaubert. He accused the public of being fickle and unjust, and asked himself, without finding any reply to his question, why, when he thought himself more worthy of favour than ever, approbation should be dealt out to him so sparingly. Doubtless he did not realize the truth that the greatest minds sometimes produce a failure, and that “*l'Éducation Sentimentale*” is one of these failures. His disappointment was the more poignant owing to its militating against a preconceived idea he had formed, and which had become with him an article of faith. He had always believed that in literary matters the public only cared about form, that style was all it really looked for. The success of several novels it would be useless to name did not deceive him. In his latest novel he believed, and with reason, that he had developed some very remarkable artistic qualities.

Further, he imagined that he had condensed into these two volumes the whole economic science of our time, with its social aspirations, and had given expression to the revolutionary tendencies which distract the country. It seemed to him that he had thus produced a work of exceptional interest.

Such an impression might surprise those who had had no experience of the illusions the most reserved of writers cherish with respect to their productions. In Flaubert's case the opinion I have just stated was a deeply-rooted belief, for when we stood together near the water and gazed at the blackened ruins of the Tuileries, of the Cour des Comptes, and of the Palais de la Légion d'Honneur, in reply to my exclamations he said, “If they had only been able to understand ‘*l'Éducation Sentimentale*’ nothing of the kind could have happened.”

It was another of his beliefs that the book was, as he said, a love story, and that in the description of Frédéric's and Madame Arnoux's adventures he had spoken the final word in the delineation of human sentiment. He did not perceive that he had described himself with all his uncertainties and doubts, his extreme timidity, his irrevocable resolutions which crumbled away of themselves when the necessity arose for putting them into execution, his intellectual fancies, which he mistook for the desire of the heart, and, above all, with his dread of being made a fool of by a woman. It is the description of a vague, troubled mental condition interesting as a psychological study, but it is not passion, and the majority of readers can only understand situations which are clearly defined.

The public understands the meaning of *yea* and *nay*, but something which is neither *yea* nor *nay* it cannot understand.

The critics dealt severely with this book. One would have thought they were eager to take advantage of the occasion to indemnify themselves for the applause they could not refuse to "*Salambô*" and to "*Madame Bovary*." Flaubert was greatly disturbed. Anything that fell short of praise gave him pain, and when I tried to console him by making a joke of the matter, he replied, "Everybody is not as pachydermatous as you are." Even when "*Salambô*" had appeared he had winced under the sting of criticism, and, in spite of my advice, had not known how to hold his peace.

He answered Sainte-Beuvé's strictures and also those of M. Frœhner, who, as a *savant* himself, had found fault with Flaubert for not being so learned as he was.

Protest was useless; each man has his own trade in this world of ours. Novelists write novels, historians history, and critics criticism, and the earth turns round. "*Salambô*" was a great success; that, as was natural, annoyed a good many people, and they made its author pay for it.

In those days there lived a certain Silvestre, notorious for having published some letters which had been entrusted to his keeping, an act which displeased Horace Vernet, who appealed to the Courts of Law. They ordered the restitution of a trust that had been abused.

Silvestre was not wanting in cleverness. He knew how to persuade Napoleon III. that only his poverty prevented him from becoming a great writer. Partly out of curiosity, perhaps, but most certainly also out of good-nature, the Emperor allowed him a pension of six thousand francs from his privy purse. Silvestre pocketed the money, did nothing, and his genius as a great writer remained latent.

He wrote a venomous criticism on "Salambô" in a paper which had a wide circulation. Flaubert wanted to pull his ears, and Bouilhet and I had great difficulty in disarming his wrath. It needed all our rhetoric to persuade him that Silvestre's articles would be forgotten to-morrow, and that "Salambô" would survive.

"l'Education Sentimentale" was the cause of the pretext for much biting and sometimes contemptuous criticism, and Flaubert was provoked by it to such a degree that he developed a strange mental peculiarity.

He grew weary of hearing himself constantly described as the author of "Madame Bovary" and his other works contrasted with it. The result was that he began to hate the book which had established his reputation and brought him renown. I have heard him read aloud some of the most admired episodes, the finest passages, dissect, criticise, and demolish them with a violence which was too excessive to be quite genuine. He would exclaim, "That is what is always being thrown at my head!" There can be no doubt, however, that he suffered. Absorbed in the adoration of his art he was ready to bring a charge of heresy against all who did not think his idol divine. It may be that without this

intense and painful form of faith he could not have borne his life of continual labour. He had not a thought nor a heart-beat apart from literature. Day and night, like a mystic who contemplates his deity, his gaze followed that ideal perfection of form towards which he aspired, and which he has achieved so often. The notion that he might have been guilty of an inaccuracy in writing a description would give him a sensation of terror. I have known him take the journey from Paris to Creil three or four times to make sure that the landscape had been correctly described. Everything became exaggerated in his mind, and the overwhelming love of his heart took the form of a chronic mental malady. A break in a sentence, the repetition of a word, an assonance, drove him to despair. He would repeat, "What a trade! What a trade! I would rather work in the quicksilver mines than struggle with this dreadful language." One day he said to me, "I wish I could have a stroke of good fortune upon the Bourse." "Why?" I inquired. "Because then I should buy back, at any cost, all the copies of 'Madame Bovary' in circulation. I should throw them in the fire, and never hear of them again." On the other hand, he always believed that "l'Education Sentimentale" was a *chef-d'œuvre*.

One day in the month of September I was out shooting alone. The sun shone fiercely. I had traversed a long field in search of game, and the moist, warm air was full of the humming of insects. The partridges would not rise, and the wood-rail hid in the long grass under the nose of my dog.

Tired out I crossed a railway cutting, left a small township on my right, and entered a pine-wood which crowns a hill and is connected with the grounds of the lunatic asylum. I seated myself under the shadow of the trees and drew in the fresh breeze which played among the branches. My dog lay near me. The gateway of the asylum opened, and I saw a procession of women advance in two rows towards the wood I sat and rested in.

It was a band of the insane patients taking their daily walk in charge of the attendants.

The unhappy creature who walked first attracted my attention. Very old, gloomy, and self-absorbed, her eyes were fixed upon the ground, her arms hung lifelessly at her side, and she seemed to glide along in obedience to some impulse from within, independently of the movement of her limbs. White, dishevelled hair escaped from under an old battered straw hat, and a ragged flower hung over the brim. Her skin was brown and livid under the eyes, the mouth had fallen in, and the loss of teeth had hollowed the cheeks. Bristling hair above the lip had taken the place of what had doubtless been a sign of beauty in youth. Her hands, with their bitten finger-nails, were half-hidden by lace mittens, tied at the wrist with a ribbon. A gold watch hung loose from her girdle, and her feet were encased in slippers, or rather in old broken shoes.

Despair was written upon her whole person, sighs deeper than those breathed by Lady Macbeth expanded her chest. It was a case of melancholia, combined with hysteria, in which the desire for death took the form of suicidal mania and of groundless despair—it is the most terrible of all diseases.

As she passed near me she bowed to me, and our eyes met. I felt a pang pass through me, for I recognized her. It was Madame Arnoux, the former apparition of Trouville, the woman my poor Flaubert had loved. Bouilhet says in his “*Melænis*” —

“*Terre ! Il est des vivants dont la vie est passée ;  
Tombeaux ! Vous n’avez pas tout le peuple des morts !*”

## CHAPTER XIV.

### DISASTER.

I WAS born in the year 1822, and since then I have lived under many different forms of government. If I venture to say that the most liberal of them all was the one established under the Second Empire, with the Marquis de Chasseloup-Laubat at the head of the Ministry, that is to say as its controlling force, I shall be charged with effrontery, but I am speaking the truth, nevertheless.

On the 15th August an amnesty was proclaimed; not a single prosecution was brought either against a newspaper editor, or against a political speaker at public meetings, however intemperate his language.

Chasseloup-Laubat upheld the right of free discussion, even when it meant abuse, calumny, and incitement to assassination in the face of the Senators, of the majority in the legislative assembly and in the ministerial council.

The departure of Chasseloup-Laubat was an irreparable loss for France. Had he been called to the Ministry on the 2nd January and been entrusted with the portfolio of foreign affairs all the machinations of the Hohenzollern incident would only have led to an exchange of diplomatic notes, and parliamentary liberty would have been peacefully developed.

I had met the Marquis de Chasseloup-Laubat in my early youth at the house of Rear-Admiral L'Hermitte's widow. He was a man endowed with rare natural gifts, extraordinary powers of applica-



tion, great administrative skill, of which he had given convincing proof, and the most untiring industry. A rare thing in a French politician, he had studied the science of politics and practised it like an art. He was a man full of ingenious resource, but like all ardent and long-sighted patriots he disdained the use of small means, and his lofty conceptions imparted something of their own greatness to the cause he upheld.

The Ministry of the 2nd of January was formed. Are the acclamations which greeted it quite forgotten? The old leaders of parliamentary life, driven from their place in the Government by the revolution of February, and debarred from a political career by the *coup d'état* of the 2nd December, reappeared upon the scene, and like ghosts of the past, initiated into the knowledge of human affairs, came to murmur counsel and encouragement in the ear of those who tried to uphold the cause of freedom. Were I to name those who crowded the apartments of the Chancery when Emile Ollivier gave his first official reception I should awaken some surprise.

As early as the 17th January, 1870, clouds began to traverse the political honeymoon. Authorization to prosecute Rochefort, then one of the deputies for Paris, was demanded of the Corps Législatif. The step was a blunder, and one contrary to the principles which had been proclaimed. The Government should have allowed absolute freedom of attack, and have retorted only by reserving to itself the right of defence.

In the course of the debate Jules Simon said to the members of the Cabinet which had come together on the 2nd January: "You were at least free to follow the example of the non-Parliamentary Government, of the non-Liberal Government which preceded you, and which for nearly six months ignored the law curtailing the liberty of the Press. It cannot be said that it lacked provocation. Every day articles as violent as that of M. Rochefort appeared in the public journals." The Marquis de

Chasseloup-Laubat, to whom Jules Simon alluded in this speech, had been consistent to his principles. In his position as a deputy he had opposed the demand to bring an action against the Comte de Montalembert on account of an offence he had committed through the Press.

In 1869, when he was a Cabinet Minister, he had applied the principle of exemption from prosecution to this class of offences. The precedents quoted did not convince the new Ministry, and the error was committed. Nevertheless, there was a considerable amount of freedom, and a general sense of relief.

Where politics are concerned I have always been somewhat ingenuous. My dream has never changed its character. I should like to see a political constitution established which should express the opinion of all who are engaged in the service of the country. I had, therefore, imagined that the men who asked for liberty during the autocratic rule of the Empire would have accepted it unquestioningly when it was offered them in a form calculated to satisfy every aspiration.

What mattered the wounds and the indignities which had been received in the fray? Had we not won the victory? To me it seemed that the generous, the patriotic part would lie in placing no hindrance across the path of France's new destiny. Many others thought the same as I did at the time, but the ruin which came upon us has obscured the days of hope which went before, and men pretend to have forgotten them.

At the moment I now refer to the country seemed to be advancing towards a prosperous state of things, which would have led it into safe and glorious paths. Liberty has powers of expansion; it would have attracted and retained the most rebellious. Universal suffrage in its action on the body politic would have produced the needed reforms, slow and peaceful ones certainly, but of a durable character. The most uncompromising obstructives, reduced to

a noisy rather than numerous group, would have learnt to tolerate, if not to accept, a system they would have found it impossible to destroy, and internal harmony might have prevailed once more in France.

When one looks back to the opening month of the year 1870 one remembers that these anticipations did not then seem illusory. It was natural to imagine that we were entering upon a course of political life similar to that in which Belgium and England have found strength and stability. Everyone knows how that dream was to vanish away. The Ministers appeared desirous of sounding public opinion upon more than one point. Commissions of inquiry were formed outside Parliamentary life, to which various problems were submitted for discussion. A decentralization commission was appointed by Imperial decree, of which I was constituted a member. I knew how it was done, but I never knew why. To my no small surprise the Emperor nominated me himself, just as he afterwards saw fit to make me a senator.

He had read my Paris studies, and he fancied that I might be of service in an assembly which should have subordinated every other question to the subject of administration. The Emperor was mistaken. I naturally incline towards centralization, and I suspected that the commission would be chiefly occupied with politics, for which I was ill-suited. As a matter of fact this commission, which was advised by Odilon Barrot to "remove the deceitful cup of popularity from its lips," was largely composed of the victims of universal suffrage and of future candidates for place. They were much stirred by political ideas. Every discussion seemed to turn more or less round the future elections for the legislative body, and questions of administration which should have been uppermost were ruled out of court. Without entering into the discussion of questions I did not understand, I had remarked in conversation with some of my colleagues that poli-

tical centralization was only the effect of administrative centralization. I added that if it was proposed to modify the one it would be necessary to diminish the strength of the other. Only one man, M. de Freycinet, was of my opinion.

Without any preparation, I was present for the first time at discussions which somewhat resembled parliamentary debates, and it seemed to me that a great many words were wasted. Subjects which had already been fully considered were again brought forward, and the same familiar arguments reproduced. I was content to listen and to keep silence. One of my colleagues attracted me, and I always tried to place myself beside him. In spite of his resolute eye his countenance was refined, his expression gentle and intelligent. He spoke but little, and his voice was not powerful, but the elevated and practical sense of his remarks arrested the attention alike of indifferent listeners and wordy speakers. I refer to President Bonjean, who, pierced by nineteen shots, afterwards fell between the Archbishop of Paris and the Curé of the Madeleine beside the outer wall of la Grande Roquette.

My recollection of this decentralization commission is not very distinct. I think that on one occasion the three sub-commissioners, namely, those of the commune, the canton, and the district, met together in full conclave; I believe that we voted in favour of several motions which might have become law in process of time, that Odilon Barrot, who had a red rose in his button-hole, made a speech, which he afterwards wrote out and published in the daily papers, and that we separated without having any very clear notion as to what we had done—such, at least, was my own case.

I was asked to sit upon two or three other commissions, but firmly declined the new honours I was offered. They engrossed the time I preferred to spend in literary occupations.

Flaubert amused himself at my expense, and now

always called me the decentralizer. I was not greatly disturbed. He was out of harmony with the spirit of political reform which had taken such a hold upon the country; sometimes it even excited his anger. He thought the freedom of the Press only fostered a bad style of writing. Everything, he declared, which agitates the public mind is injurious to the cause of literature, because other and more ephemeral interests take its place. No political change seemed to him so important as the appearance of a new poem or novel, or the first representation of a new play at the theatre. Instead of the usual debates in Parliament he would have preferred lectures on Goethe, Michael Angelo, or Ronsard. Nothing interested him outside the domain of literature and art, and in this respect he was a striking exception among the men of his time. If he had a preference for one form of government over another, at least his ideas did not suffer any material change. I have heard him express two opinions, which, although different in themselves, would inevitably have led to the same result.

He would have wished for a kind of Chinese form of government, which should place the affairs of the country in the hands of men chosen after a course of preliminary study and competitive examination for their superior intelligence. He was mistaken, but he imagined that under such a system writers and artists would control the destinies of the nation, and that humanity must profit by the intellectual efflorescence which would ensue.

After all the difficulties of his method had been explained to him he generally exclaimed, "Well, then, give me a tyrant who will protect letters and art, and lift us out of the mediocrity we now grovel in."

I am not sure that this was really his own theory; he may have borrowed it from Théophile Gautier, who all his life longed for the rule of a Francis I. or of a Medicis.

Flaubert had invented a strange plan with a view to encourage literature. He used to say, "The only way to ensure the production of first-rate plays is to pass sentence of death by law upon any dramatic author whose play shall not achieve a triumphant success when put upon the stage. Then only men of real genius will venture to write plays."

This would have been a rather violent measure, and would have led to many executions, for until public opinion has pronounced a contrary judgment each man imagines his production a *chef-d'œuvre*.

To our exclusive interest in literary and artistic matters it now seems to me that we owed the last pleasant incidents of our lives. We had watched the political adventures France is so readily drawn into with indifference. In the July of 1830 we were children, in the February of 1848 we remained unconcerned spectators, listened sarcastically to all the idle rumours afloat, and were amused by the excitement of the crowd. The wars we remembered, the campaigns in Algiers, in the Crimea, and in Italy had been successful. Certainly the expedition to Mexico had turned out badly, but Mexico was so distant. We imagined that we were impervious to certain feelings, and did not realize that we had never experienced them.

Glorious deeds, names like the Alma, Inkermann, Traktir, Sebastopol, Palestro, Magenta, and Solferino sounded in our ears like the clarion of victory, and we had no misgivings. How abruptly we were to be roused out of our dream and stirred to the depths of that mysterious region of our being which is the seat of patriotic feeling! M. de Bismarck managed cleverly. He dealt with us as he had dealt with Austria in 1866.

When he had made his plan and prepared the ambush he succeeded in provoking a declaration of war from France, gave himself the airs of an injured man acting on the defensive, and threw the onus of aggression upon us.

Like a practised angler, he guided the unconscious fish into his net. One moment of anxiety he certainly endured. The unanimity of the French nation in its desire for war deceived him; he fancied that the country must be well prepared. He mistook what was a sign of the natural inconsequence of our character for a demonstration of strength.

When war was declared I was in Germany. Business to be attended to, the necessary precautions I had to take, and the rather numerous "smalah"\* I had to bring with me, prevented my immediate return to France. When I was ready for my journey the trains were crowded with soldiers. I was obliged to drive in a carriage as far as the interior of Wurtemberg before I could reach a freer line of railway. A slight accident caused a stoppage of the train at Ulm, and kept us there for nearly half-an-hour. Germany then feared an attack from the side of the valley of the Danube, so often the scene of our victories, and was massing troops between Michelsberg and Ravensbourg. I had left the railway compartment, which was intensely hot, and I stood under the shade in a square which faces the station. In the distance I heard the sound of a grand and solemn chant. It seemed to float through the air like the music of an invisible choir. The children began to run in the direction of the sound. The song came near, the tones were clearer, and stirred my heart by the religious fervour which thrilled through them. I recognized Luther's Chorale. A regiment on its way to garrison the citadel poor General Mack had once yielded with so little resistance to the French was chanting the song. I confess that I was deeply moved. I asked myself what would be the character of a war men entered upon to the singing of psalms.

I arrived in Paris after having rapidly traversed Switzerland. The Emperor had left two days

\* An Arab chief's suite. Familiarly used in France to describe a large family.

before. There I came upon a different scene. On the Boulevards in the evening they were drinking absinthe and joking with the girls. Men in blouses lolled back in open carriages and shouted the "Marseillaise." Was it that I was older or that the national air had changed? I cannot say, but it displeased me, and I felt that it contained a challenge which was not addressed solely to the enemy.

The day after my return I was summoned to the presence of an important personage, who shall be nameless. The conversation was long and, to me, painful. I had to do with a man who did not suspect the strength, nor the discipline, nor the morale of the German armies.

My interlocutor said to me just as I was about to take my leave —

"Come and see me again in two or three days; there is a question I should like to discuss with you."

Desirous of being prepared, I asked —

"What question is it?"

"The frontier question," he replied; "the Rhine, the Moselle, the Saar, the Meuse; I admit that I have rather a confusion in my brain about them."

I returned home, and was told that I looked sad.

Can anyone yet have forgotten the frenzied excitement of the populace? So confident were they of victory that the irreconcilables, the systematic enemies of the Empire, called out for peace. Surely no one can have forgotten the crowded processions on the Boulevards, and the oft-repeated cry of "A Berlin!" The strongest heads were turned. At the opera the "Marseillaise" was called for on the Wednesday which preceded the declaration of war. The orchestra was about to play the air, when the audience demanded the "Rhin Allemand." The musicians seemed to hesitate, and the manager, advancing to the foot-lights, announced that de Musset's verses could not be sung, because there had not been time to learn them.



Thereupon Emile de Girardin stood up in his box and cried out —

“Does it take longer then to learn it than to take it?”

Everybody applauded.

Two days later an actor, in the uniform of the Garde Nationale Mobile, sang the “Rhin Allemand,” and received a perfect ovation. The misfortunes we were to endure followed upon a period of reckless illusion. Ah, accursed days! How they oppress the memory!

Two days after I read the following telegram placarded upon the walls of Paris:—“MacMahon has lost a battle.” I met two of my friends, one of them a judge at the Court of Exchequer, the other the head of a Government office. Silently we pressed one another’s hands, and walked along side by side. In the garden of the Tuileries we sat down on a bench under the chestnuts with our feet on the damp ground. Our hearts were oppressed with grief; we could find no words to express the anguish which devoured us. We stayed there an hour, plunged in gloom, foreseeing nothing but ruin, yet ready to catch at any ray of hope. One of us said to the others, “Let us go and see; there may be good news.”

That roused us from our stupor, and all along the Rue Castiglione we looked at the pillars on which they posted telegraphic despatches from the headquarters of the army; we read and reread the same statements in our search for “good news.” Alas! the good news tarried long, so long that we still wait for it.

On the 4th of September I was at the office of the *Journal des Debats*. Then everything was over; the revolutionaries were helping forward the work of the invaders. Most of those who were in the editorial room were quite overwhelmed. Someone came in, however, and said: “Never mind, we are at least quit of the Buonapartes.” True, we were quit of the Buonapartes, but quit also of Alsace and

Lorraine, of five millions of money, of many public buildings burnt down, and of a great many good men who had been butchered.

On my way home I heard a shoemaker say to another shoemaker —

“My stars! I shall illuminate my house to-night.”

I started with indignation, and called out to him —

“Put away your lights until every Prussian has left the country.”

“Citizen!” he replied, “this great internal triumph will compel them to recross the frontier.”

I sat down on the steps of the Church of Saint Roch and could not restrain my tears.

The Comte de Montrond used to say, “There is nothing in the world so criminal as stupidity!” France was like a man struck by a thunderbolt who retains the appearance of life, but crumbles into dust at the first touch. Ruin had come upon her with the first shock of misfortune. “A French army capitulates,” wrote Mérimée to Panizzi, “an Emperor gives himself up to the enemy; everything has collapsed at the same moment.”

The steps about to be taken and the efforts made to repair the mischief could only sink us deeper in the abyss. How was it possible to be so blind as not to understand this truth? Did the free-thinkers expect a miracle as the credulous believed in Sainte Genevieve?

Naturally the Emperor was charged with the fault—I should say, with the crime. After Novara the Italians shot General Ramorino, and said, “The blame was entirely his, not ours.” When a nation has been wounded in the depths of its being it is useless to expect that it will judge impartially. Nevertheless two men, M. Segris and Napoleon III., who formed part of the cabinet council which decided to declare war, opposed the step. But what did that matter? Had he been victorious the Emperor would have reaped the laurels; as he was defeated

he reaped only disgrace. That is justice, and is the price which must be paid by those in authority. A sovereign, especially one elected by the suffrages of the people, is bound to disappear when defeated. After Sedan, after the capitulation, the Emperor could no longer remain upon the throne of France. Without another revolution he could never have been brought back to the Tuileries. I have often heard it said that the policy of Napoleon III. was a haphazard policy without definite aims, and founded on the vicious principle which is summed up in the familiar saying, "*Carpe Diem.*" That may be true of his domestic policy, but as I was never initiated into it I am unable to express an opinion upon the subject. It often seemed to me that it was oppressive and unwieldy; that is all I can say, for I did not understand it.

With respect to his foreign policy I think there is misconception. It was conspicuous and brilliant in its manifestations, and seems to me to have had but one result—the well-being and the glorification of the Latin races.

At Bethlehem the Eastern Question was reopened by an incident which affected the religion of those races solely, a religion always overshadowed in the East by the influence of the Greek Church; the Crimean War followed; it was glorious by reason of the difficulties surmounted by the French armies.

Napoleon III. at once took advantage of the supremacy he had acquired by the Treaty of Paris to open up the great Latin lake, the Mediterranean, to pierce the Isthmus of Suez, and to give to the navies of Latin countries a direct right of way to the Indian Ocean. In Italy he repulsed the Germanic race which had subjugated a Latin race, and prepared the work of liberation which was finally to restrict the foreigner within his boundaries. He tried to found a colony in Cochin China, in which the Latin element should be developed side by side with the English element.

In Mexico it was his desire to re-establish the

dominion of a Latin race lost by Spain so as to counterbalance the all-pervading influence of the Anglo-Saxon in North America.

Where did he eventually succumb? Where did he break his sceptre and deprive his dynasty of a throne? Was it not beside the Rhine, that grave of the Latin race?

He fell to secure the permanence of the great Latin family; immediately Spain set him at naught, Italy profited by the event to complete her unity, like a schoolboy who avails himself of the master's absence to perpetrate some piece of mischief. She armed herself in haste and proceeded to despoil the Old Man of the Seven Hills.

It seems to me that Napoleon III. ever regarded himself as the standard-bearer of the Latin race, and that the whole of his external policy was dictated by this idea. Our neighbours beyond the Alps did not understand him. God grant they may not have cause to repent their blindness!

A personal and private misfortune came upon me, "domestic and terrible," as Montesquieu would have said, in the midst of public calamity. A tempest swept over me. Let me pass it by in silence; this is not the place to retail my sufferings. Perhaps some day I may have the courage to write about the nightmare I fought for nineteen months and overcame in the end!

If I were now asked to choose between death and one such hour as I then had to endure I should not hesitate, but gratefully welcome death.

I had left Paris, and Flaubert wrote to me —

"Where are you? What are you doing? How terrible a misfortune has fallen upon you! I know not what will become of you."

I replied, "I have courage and will struggle on as long as human strength will allow."

"How happy," he added, "are those who did not live to see the present state of things."

Overwhelmed as Flaubert was by the defeat of France, he still retained not only hope, but a number

of illusions, and lent an attentive ear in the expectation of hearing the salvoes which should proclaim victory. The craving for deliverance was a necessity with him, the passionate desire to avert the catastrophe, and he lived in a world of dreams which he mistook for reality. Nothing could enlighten him; he was blinded by love of his country. He pinned his faith in turn to sharpshooters and to dare-devil regiments, believed that untrained men are soldiers, and crowds armies, relied upon Glais-Bizoin and Crémieux, upon proclamations and liberator balloons. Rouen, he imagined, would allow itself to be mined and blown up by gunpowder before it would yield to the enemy. Paris he was convinced would never capitulate. He believed in a wholesale sortie from the city, in European intervention, in the assistance of America, in the Germans being tired out; in fact, he believed in everything except in defeat. That idea he could not accept; even when the armistice was concluded, Paris re-opened, and the treaty of peace signed, he was scarcely able to realize it.

I envied him his unshaken faith, for I no longer cherished a ray of hope. As I had followed armies in the field I was aware that the demoralization caused by a defeat is equivalent to the loss of half of the effective force. One of the chances of life had led me to spend some time near one of the fortified German cities, and without being a great captain I knew quite enough to take the measure of the German soldier and to understand the admirable discipline which has made him what he is. I was acquainted with the country in which the first battles were fought, and I knew that an iron wall had risen up between Alsace and Lorraine; therefore I could not fail to perceive that MacMahon, separated from Bazaine, would have to undertake a most hazardous march in order to rejoin him, with no safe retreat in the rear, and no refuge in front of him.

After Woërh, I gave way to despair, and when I

knew that Bazaine's admirable army, instead of making for Paris, which it could have relieved in the character of a flying squadron, had entangled itself about Metz, I perceived that two courses only were open to us, either to treat for peace or to die fighting.

A very near relative of mine, a general of division, then held a high military command in Paris. Between the disaster of Wœrth and the date of the 4th September I often visited him.

He was worn out with fatigue, for he worked day and night; he tried to collect men from every quarter, and to despatch them to Chalons, where reorganization was being attempted.

"Where could MacMahon fight a battle?" I asked him.

With the phlegm of a soldier who is accustomed to face fire and sword, he still went on signing the papers which lay upon his table, and replied —

"There is only Sedan, so far as I know, and that is like a basin; our troops will be crushed to death in it."

This speech from the lips of a General distinguished for his knowledge of military organization and strategy stirred me in a strange way.

"And afterwards?" I rejoined.

"Afterwards? There will be nothing to do but to try to make peace under the least unfavourable conditions, or to resign ourselves to a prolonged war with the certainty before us that the country will be ravaged by the enemy unless a miracle should be performed on our behalf, and I do not believe in miracles, nor you either, I presume."

My own views were founded upon what I knew of Germany, and confirmed by this conversation. Therefore, I could not share Flaubert's illusions, and I endeavoured to enlighten him to spare him a painful awakening. I find in my possession two letters we exchanged while the German troops were being massed under the walls of Paris. They are

interesting because they express the two different opinions which prevailed in France at that time.

Flaubert had written thus, "Tell me frankly what you think," and my reply was contained in the following letter \* :—

"19th September, 1870.

"You wish to know what I think of all this. It will not be difficult to tell you, for I have ceased to think anything ; such total ruin was never seen before.

"The war inspired me with horror from the very beginning, with more than apprehension, for I knew with what a formidable power we should have to deal. I expected drawn battles and doubtful engagements which might end in defeat, but I did not realize that we were approaching dissolution. Besides, the game was never made so easy to an enemy. Worse than a crime, the day of the 4th September was an act of unspeakable folly.

"The Republic has made itself responsible for the humiliation, no light burden, of this peace, which should have been left to the Empire. The Empire could have been swept away easily, as soon as the peace was concluded, for its existence had become impossible. Surely anyone might have foreseen the situation we should be placed in by such an act of violence. With respect to the government of the country, all internal organization was completely destroyed, respect for law and for moral control were broken down, and civil administration upset. What happened to the military organization you know yourself.

"Were it not so terrible the situation would be positively grotesque when one reflects that such is our self-inflicted condition, that we have engaged in the struggle with powerful, numerous, and well-

\* In 1875 Flaubert referred in conversation to this letter. He spoke of it in such terms that I had a desire to read it again. He sent it to me and I kept it, for which reason I am now able to reproduce it.

disciplined forces, with an enemy which is thoroughly instructed, ambitious, and victorious.

"With regard to our external policy, the centre of government is at Paris, but a body of delegates, acting under the central authority, is at Tours, and external policy means for us now the assistance we might derive from the neutral powers or the overtures of peace we might make to Bismarck. As our fall has not been officially announced, the only properly constituted Government is the regency, the captive Emperor the only recognized head, yet the red flag waves over Lyons and Toulouse.

"With whom in the present state of affairs are foreign powers to treat?

"Possibly Bismarck may not see fit to treat either with the Empire which France does not recognize or with the Republic which he refuses to recognize. Darkness and chaos are all pervading.

"This war was begun by a phantom, and is carried on by shadows. Crémieux has succeeded Napoleon III.; a dotard has taken the place of a somnambulist. The nation weeps and laments, is in despair, proclaims its innocence, and casts the blame upon the Empire. The nation is in the wrong; she had her fate in her own hands, and this is what she has made of it.

"We are dying from a plethora of ignorance and presumption. France went in search of political reforms and of social reforms which resulted in nothing. The moral reforms which might have saved her she has utterly neglected. Had I the power I would make terms at once, undismayed by the severe conditions I should be offered, for the issue of the war is no longer doubtful, and the longer the struggle continues the harder the terms we shall be forced to accept. Afterwards I should frame a Draconian code of military discipline, and for the training of the young above all; this training should be moral as well as scientific.

"It is morality which moulds character, and character is the basis of national life. You may rest



assured that nothing of that kind will be done. The French nation will be informed that it is the first nation in the world, that it has been betrayed and handed over to the enemy—in a word, that it is exempt from all blame. Therefore the French nation will continue to grovel in ignorance, to have the smallest number of children possible, to drink absinthe, and to run after women.

“We perish because we cannot rest, and are in a state of aimless agitation. St. Vitus’s dance is not true movement. We have no men because we have no ideas, and no principle because we have no morals. We are saturated with rhetoric, possess a scaffolding of faith, sentiment, and devotion, but there is nothing behind it. Everything is false and theatrical about us, because we are members of the Latin race. We only care ‘for appearances,’ like the Baron de Fœneste. It is like the end of the world. There is a passage in the ‘Mémoires d’outre-tombe’ which haunts me like a knell: ‘It would not be surprising if a people fourteen centuries old, which has closed its long career by a series of portents, had reached the term of its existence.’ I do not believe in the siege of Paris. The Prussians have not yet committed a military error. They will not, surely, fall into one now, and try to take possession of an immense city which has patriotically declared in all the newspapers that it is provisioned for three months. They will station picquets along the approaches to the city to stop provisions from being brought in, will skilfully throw up batteries and station detachments of cavalry here and there so that the network of investiture spread round Paris will be complete. The question of the continuance of the siege depends entirely upon how long the provisions hold out. When Paris has eaten her last crust, when the last workman has killed the last *bourgeois*, or the last *bourgeois* has killed the last workman, they will call a parley and capitulate.

“Shall we lose Alsace and Lorraine? Yes! Unless we have a really capable statesman, who

has a thorough knowledge of Germany and understands how to manage the negotiations. We ought to be ready to dismantle Metz and Strasburg, and the whole chain of fortresses along the frontier, but try to save the provinces. In their place we ought to offer our colonies, on the principle that it is better to lose one's hair than to lose one's head. In spite of her wealth Germany is stifled within her own borders, because she has no real seaboard upon the ocean. She cannot consume her own produce, and she is unable to export her goods freely. Her resources are insufficient to provide for the needs of her population, a part of which is compelled to emigrate to America. On this account our colonies in the Antillies and our settlements in Indo-China might prove a serious temptation to her. Should she consent to this exchange she might become a maritime power of the first order, and she would then have to reckon with England.

"This is a long letter, and yet I do not know if I have really answered your question. General X., who has not forgotten you, sends you a cordial greeting.

"Before all the means of communication are stopped write to me and tell me how you are. I do not write to you about the state of purgatory I live in. At such a time it is impossible to write of one's private affairs."

Flaubert replied in the following terms :—

"29th September, 1870.

"I write in reply to your letter of the 19th, received this morning. First, I embrace you warmly, and I pity you from the bottom of my heart. Now let us talk. Since last Sunday everything is changed, and we know that it is war to the death. All hope of peace is lost. The most faint-hearted people have become courageous. I will give you proof of it. The first battalion of the National Guard of Rouen started yesterday, and the second goes to-morrow. The Municipal Council

has voted a million of money to purchase cannons and *chassepot* guns. The peasants are in a state of fury. I prophesy that in a fortnight the whole of France will have risen.

“A peasant near Mantes strangled a Prussian soldier and tore him with his teeth. In short, the enthusiasm is now a reality.

“As for Paris, it is able to hold out, and it will do so. Whatever the English papers may say to the contrary, the most cordial feeling exists among all classes. There will be no civil war. The *bourgeois* have become genuinely Republican, from fear in the first place, and from necessity in the second. People have no time to dispute; I think the social question is now postponed to a distant future.

“News is brought us by pigeons and by balloons. The few private letters which have reached us here in Rouen agree in stating that for the last ten days we had the advantage in all the engagements which have taken place outside Paris—that of the 23rd was important. The *Times* lies in the most impudent manner. The armies of the Loire and of Lyons are by no means myths. In the last twelve days fifty-five thousand men have passed through Rouen. They are casting an immense number of cannons at Bourges and in the centre of France. If Bazaine could only be set free and we could cut off all the enemy’s means of communication with Germany we should still be saved. In the open field our military resources are of no great account, but our skirmishing parties annoy these Prussian gentry exceedingly. They declare that we harass them in the most shameless fashion—at least, so they said at Mantes. What we stand most in need of are good generals and officers.

“Well, never mind, we are full of hope. As for me, I have quite recovered my spirits after having been on the point of going mad and committing suicide. I have bought a soldier’s knapsack, and I am ready to face anything.

“I can assure you we are getting on splendidly; four hundred soldiers of the Garde Mobile arrived here, at Croisset, from the Pyrenees. I have taken in two of them, not to mention two in Paris; my mother has two at Rouen, C., five in Paris and two at Dieppe. I pass my time drilling, and I join the patrol at night. I have gone back to my work since last Sunday, and I am no longer depressed. In spite of all there have been some exquisitely ludicrous scenes. It fills me with despair to think of the amount of absurdity we shall indulge in afterwards. All *gentillesse* (graciousness or amenity), as Montaigne says, will disappear for a long time. We shall live in a new world. Our children will be brought up in the hatred of the Prussians! Military rule and the most servile utilitarianism is the prospect before us unless, indeed, the fire and smoke should have purified the atmosphere, and we should come out of it all safer and stronger. I think we shall soon be revenged upon Europe by a general upset. Perhaps England, Austria, and Russia will begin to repent when all the Dutch ports, Courland and Trieste, are in the hands of the Prussians.

“The Emperor William was wrong not to make peace after Sedan. Our humiliation would have been complete and ineffaceable, but now we are beginning to calculate and to think of our interests. As to our present chances of success, who can tell? The Prussian army is a marvellous instrument of precision. But machines get out of order unexpectedly; the least flaw may break a spring. True, our enemies have all the science on their side, but it were unwise not to take into account such elements as the patriotic sentiment, enthusiasm, and despair. The cause of right must triumph in the end, and ours is now the cause of right. What you say is true, we are paying for having lived so long in an atmosphere of lies. Everything was a sham; we had a sham army, sham politics, literature was a sham, our credit was a sham. Even our mistresses

were false. To speak the truth was considered immoral. All last winter Persigny reproached me with 'having no ideal!' They will have some splendid ideals now; it will be a pretty story to write about! Oh, how it humiliates me to feel that I have become a savage; my heart is as hard as a flint! Nevertheless I mean to muffle myself up in my costume, and take a little military promenade in the Canteleu wood.

"You can imagine the number of poor people we have about us. All the factories are closed, and the workmen are without work and without bread. It will be a nice state of things this winter.

"Perhaps I am mad, but something tells me, in spite of all we see around us, that we shall find a way of escape.

"Give the General my respects, and accept yourself every affectionate message."

This letter distressed me, for it proved that Flaubert's mind was completely deluded. I knew that he would be roughly awakened from his dream. I managed to write again; I forget what I wrote, only I remember I quoted a saying of Bossuet's, "The surest proof of mental aberration is to believe facts to be as we would have them ourselves."

Nothing came to pass according to Flaubert's dream. That "something within" which had promised him victory was mistaken. We went from one defeat to another, until the ground seemed to give way under our feet.

After having taken possession of Amiens, the Germans advanced upon Normandy in order to secure the lower portion of the Seine. At Buchy an engagement took place, and our troops retreated in the greatest disorder.

I saw them pass by night in clear, piercing weather, with fourteen degrees of frost on the ground, perilous to ill-clad, ill-shod, half-famished lads worn out by a march which seemed endless.

At Pont-Audemer, where we were, and which the Germans entered two days later, we were able to

receive, feed, and lodge these fragments of battalions confused together in a disorganized crowd. The men called to their comrades, sought them, and did not recognize each other. The line of approach by the Risle was not defended. The road between Honfleur and Caen was open to the enemy.

The Germans did not penetrate far in that direction; they had no object in doing so. The *dénouement* was to take place at Paris, a fortified city of two million inhabitants, where the difficulty of provisioning the population would alone almost inevitably ensure defeat. It was merely a question of time, and the Germans, well-fed, lodged, and clad, were in no hurry.

At Pont-Audemer I was near Gustave Flaubert, but each of us had duties to perform which became each day more imperious in their claims upon our time; we could not even meet to exchange a greeting. After the fight at Buchy the town of Rouen laid down its arms and opened its gates to receive the conqueror. There was nothing else to be done. The town was exposed, its houses crowded along the banks of the Seine; it is overshadowed by unfortified hills, and could have offered no resistance. Deserted, too, by our soldiers, the authorities declined to attempt a hopeless defence, and to run the risk of subjecting their city to military execution. They yielded to save it from destruction. They cannot be blamed, for even had they been able to stop the advance of the Germans they could not have materially changed our disintegrated condition.

When Flaubert learnt that Rouen was occupied by the enemy, and saw their outposts even approach Croisset, he was thunderstruck. Some possibilities seem inadmissible, and the idea of ever seeing a foreign soldier encamped under his windows and in his garden or quartered in his house had never crossed his mind. The thought that everything would be seized, destroyed, and pillaged overpowered him. He told me that he felt dazed, and, unable to resist the impulse of the

moment, he took all his papers up in armfuls, books, notes, and letters, and threw them upon the fire. He scarcely knew himself what he had destroyed in that hour of dismay and terror.

Afterwards we searched together for a document I had lent him, and which I required. It could not be found.

"I have burnt so many things," he said to me, "no doubt I burnt that also."

I do not know if the manuscripts of "Novembre," of his first "Education Sentimentale," of his two first "Saint Antoinnes," and of the "Voyage en Corse" were committed to the flames.

I should be sorry if it were so, for all his early works deserved to be preserved.

It is always interesting to note the gradual development of exceptional genius, and to trace the path which has led it to the summit of fame.

We had long planned to examine his papers together so as to decide which to destroy and which to preserve. It would have been a long and painful task, and we deferred its execution. Unfortunately death was not a party to the postponement, and interposed between us and our work.

I remember that one day Flaubert wished to make a selection from among the letters in his possession. He began to read them, but tears rose to his eyes; he flung them and the emotions they called up once more into the depths of the chest which had entombed them, and did not touch them again.

The period during which the German soldiers were quartered in his house was for him one of great misery. Nervous irritation he could not master, although he endeavoured to do so, was added to the pain and humiliation of defeat. The restraint imposed upon his impetuous character by the fact of their presence had most deplorable results. The nervous disease from which for seven years he had had a reprieve returned, and again he suffered what were now unaccustomed tortures.

A certain restlessness and impatience he contracted at this time remained with him until the day of his death.

The invasion with which he had been brought into such direct contact had coincided with the return of his illness; they seemed identical, and thus the sense of injury suffered from the Germans was magnified, until he was sometimes ready to cry aloud with the pain. He struggled with this feeling, and although always easily influenced by current opinion, he tried to resist a sentiment he thought unworthy of a superior mind, equitable in its judgments, familiar with history, and aware that hitherto, at least, war has seemed a necessity to the life of nations.

One day at my house in Paris, three or four years, perhaps, after the war, our conversation took us back to that period. He described to me, perhaps for the twentieth time, the sensation of horror he had experienced when looking down the towing-path at Croisset he saw the spike of a Prussian soldier's helmet gleam in the sunshine!

On my table he observed the second volume of Goethe's "Conversations." He opened it and turned over the pages as if searching for a passage that had remained in his memory.

"Ah!" he said to me, "what would I not give to be like this demi-god! There was a man whose nerves were under the control of his brain. Listen to this—a national hatred is a peculiar hatred. It is always most violent, most excessive in the lower regions of thought, but there are heights which it does not reach. In that sphere a man dwells, so to speak, above the influence of nationality, and feels the happiness or the misery of a neighbouring people as if it were his own. This elevated sphere was congenial to my character, and long before I had attained my sixtieth year I had become attached to it."

Flaubert threw down the book and exclaimed—



"It would seem that this region was not suited to my nature, for I have not yet been able to reach so high."

Even in the midst of the distresses caused by the war literature still engaged his thoughts, and public events presented themselves to his imagination as subjects for novels or for dramatic scenes. He regretted that he had finished his second version of "l'Education Sentimentale" too early. The war, the invasion, Sedan, each of these would have furnished him with an effective termination, with a final tableaux, as he expressed it. He was in despair at not having been able to utilize such material.

"Imagine," he would say to me, "the capital one might have made out of certain incidents. Here, for instance, is one which would have been excellent in calibre." That was a favourite expression of his: "The capitulation has been signed, the army is under arrest, the Emperor"—he spoke of him by his surname—"the Emperor, sunk back in a corner of his large carriage, is gloomy and dull-eyed; he smokes a cigarette to keep himself in countenance, and though a tempest is raging within him, tries to appear impassible. Beside him are his aides-de-camp and a Prussian General. All are silent, each glance is lowered; there is pain in every heart.

"Where the two roads cross the procession is stopped by a column of prisoners guarded by some Uhlans, who wear the *chapska* perched on their ear, and ride with couched lances. The carriage has to be stopped before the human flood, which advances amid a cloud of dust, reddened by the rays of the sun. The men walk dragging their feet and with slouched shoulders. The Emperor's languid eye contemplates this crowd. What a strange review. He thinks of the former ones, of the drums beating, of the waving standards, of his generals covered with gold lace and saluting him with their swords, and of his guard shouting, 'Vive l'Empereur!'

"A prisoner recognizes him and salutes him, then another and another.

"Suddenly a Zouave leaves the ranks, shakes his fist, and cries, 'Ah! There you are, you villian; we have been ruined by you!'

"Then ten thousand men yell insults, wave their arms threateningly, spit upon the carriage, and pass like a whirlwind of curses. The Emperor still remains immovable without making a sign or uttering a word, but, he thinks, 'those are the men they used to call my Pretorian Guards!'

"Well! What do you think of that for a situation? It is pretty powerful, is it not? That would have made rather a stirring final scene for my 'Education?' I cannot console myself for having missed it. But I shall still avail myself of it. I will write a novel about the Empire, and bring in the evening receptions at Compiègne with all the ambassadors, marshals, and senators, rattling their decorations as they bent to the ground to kiss the hand of the Prince Imperial.

"Yes, indeed! The period will furnish material for some capital books. Perhaps after all, in the universal harmony, the *coup d'état* and all its results was only intended to provide a few able penmen with attractive scenes."

He often told me that he was only saved from despair when the German soldiers were wandering about his garden and sleeping under his roof, by the literary combinations which haunted his brain. I hoped to be able to take the Rouen route on my return to Paris, so as to see Flaubert at Rouen and then to continue my journey.

I found it impossible to do so, and I had to return without being able to satisfy myself as to his physical condition, or, what was of more importance, as to his moral condition. The railway service was disorganized, the *diligences* no longer existed, and I could only travel by short stages through the snow and frost, and over a country occupied by the enemy. I heard the country and townspeople say, "Paris has made a *sortie en masse*, has overpowered

the Prussians, and is marching upon Havre." Paris had capitulated after being reduced to its last morsel of bread, and I had left for the capital as soon as the news had reached me. The German troops were massed near St. Germain; the victualling of the city, which had commenced, was interrupted, owing to a telegraphic despatch from Léon Gambetta. He had declined the armistice and ordered the continuance of hostilities. Therefore, 150,000 kilograms of flour, forwarded to the famished population, had been stopped at Saint-Germain, and the railway carts despatched by the companies arrived empty.

I had no free pass, and without such a permit I could not enter Paris. I was able to come to terms with a railway guard travelling with some railway vans (camions).<sup>\*</sup> My family and I were picked up by him on his rounds; we passed the night under the Courbevoie archway, shaken every now and then by the struggles of a horse which tried to break through the traces, and hidden under tarpaulins lest we should attract the attention of the Prussian mounted patrol. The next day, at eleven in the morning, we crossed the Neuilly Bridge. No sooner had I reached home than I started out again, and walked along the Boulevard des Batignolles to take a look at Paris.

From a great bare space, all that is left of the Errancis Cemetery, proceeded the sound of voices, and I drew near. About a hundred Gardes Nationaux were collected there, not drilling nor preparing for the game of war—no! They were preparing for the game of "bouchon."<sup>†</sup>

<sup>\*</sup> These are the large carts used for the transport of heavy goods from any locality to the railway stations, or from the stations to private houses.

<sup>†</sup> "Jeu de bouchon," a game to which soldiers and Parisian street-boys are much addicted. Money is staked on a cork, and the game consists in throwing pebbles at it and trying to hit it. The most successful player gets all the money staked on the cork. There is a certain amount of skill required. Street-boys generally stake sous upon the game, but the soldiers in this instance played with five-franc pieces.—TRANS.

One of them ran along the ranks and cried "Here! make haste! The game cannot begin until the stakes amount to a hundred francs; there are still fifteen wanting!"

Three of these heroes each contributed a hundred sous, and the game began. I took myself off, but I understood now why we had suffered such a wholesale defeat. I was reminded of the retreat of Marfisa related by Ariosto, "As for the timid populace, it was but little disposed to face danger, and contented itself with calling out from a distance, "Courage, friends! Courage."

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## CHAPTER XV.

### THE LAST PARTINGS.

I DID not leave Paris during the existence of the Commune. Part of what I know about it I have related elsewhere. Flaubert wrote to me, "Have you been arrested?" and I replied, "Not yet," but I had a narrow escape. The order to incarcerate me at Mazas, signed by Gabriel Ranvier and by Gambon, was issued on the 22nd May. Already, however, the "Versaillais" were at my house; the Communists were too late. Contrary to my usual sedentary habits I went out a great deal during those days of mad fury. I met very few persons of my acquaintance, for all who could had fled from the sacrilegious city now preparing to disappear in flames before the eyes of the Germans.

One day, however, early in May, as I turned the corner of the Rue du Quatre-Septembre and of the Place de la Bourse I came face to face with Auber, whom I used to meet at Pradier's studio. He was now eighty-six years of age. The last time I had seen him he was surrounded by ladies elegantly dressed, and did not seem to object to their attentions.

He was still the same correct, well-dressed, polished gentleman, but his countenance expressed the resignation of despair; his whole form seemed contracted, and when we shook hands there was no smile upon his lips. We spoke of the present hour. The gesture with which he shrugged his shoulders expressed disgust rather than discouragement.

"When I was nine years old," he said, "I ran away from my father's shop; he was a print seller, and I saw the carriage pass in which Louis XVI. was seated, on the 21st January, 1793. I remember the Revolution perfectly. We did not always have enough to eat, we were often short of bread. Those were dark days, but less criminal, less stupid than those we are passing through and than what they are doing now." We spoke together for some time. At parting I said, "*Au revoir.*" He shook his head. "No! adieu! The end has come. The old stag has been run to earth. I shall die on Wednesday or Thursday next."

He kept his word. On Thursday, the 11th of May, he passed away gently, like a man tired out who has fallen asleep.

When the army of Versailles had done away with the obscene horrors of the Commune the city began to shake off the nightmare which had oppressed it, and people came from abroad and from the provinces to gaze upon its self-inflicted wounds. Flaubert hurried back to Paris in order to embrace those he loved rather than to see the ruins.

He was persuaded that he had suffered more from the war than anyone else. I did not seek to combat this illusion. When shown the ruins of public buildings, blackened by smoke and flame, and told the tale of the crimes the Commune had committed, he repeated, "What brutes, what brutes!" Then he went back to Croisset unable to restrain his indignation.

One day I was standing in the Rue de Lille opposite some of the blackened remains. I saw Théophile Gautier approach me leaning upon the arm of one of our common friends. Ah! poor Théo, how changed he was. He had grown unwieldy and dragged one of his legs. His countenance was more pallid than usual, his cheeks were flabby, his eyelids swollen, the mouth was half open as if to utter a cry of wrath. He lifted up his arms when he noticed my presence, and exclaimed, "So it is this



herd of fanatics, incendiaries, and murderers they call the sovereign people!" He walked as far as the Palais du Conseil d'Etat. There with difficulty he climbed the staircase, partially destroyed by fire and scattered over with *débris* from the vaulted ceiling, and looked at the remains of Chassériau's pictures. He was seeking the portrait of a face he loved. Almost by miracle it had been preserved from the petroleum. He found it scarcely touched, and he gave a start of pleasure. Gautier stood looking at it for some time as if his youth evoked from the ruins of those crumbled walls had appeared before him and spoken to him of the past.

He would say to me, "I am sated with these horrors. All I want is to lie upon my back and sleep, but I must go on producing 'copy' if I am not to die of hunger. I wish I knew a kind Turk fond of French poetry, so that I might live at Constantinople. I would ask him for a plate of pilaf, a chibouk, and a carpet to lie upon, and I would try to forget that I belong to those western races who rob and burn and kill, and then boast that they represent civilization, whereas they represent only ferocity and stupidity." He was much affected. "I do not care to die," he said, "but I wish I were dead. Oh, how wise of our poor Louis to go away and not to stay here and witness these horrors! We had some imagination surely in the days when "*Hernani*" and the "*Roi S'Amuse*" were produced, but not so much imagination as these gorillas, who think themselves the equals of Sardanapolis because they have set fire to a neighbour's house and then run away from it." We remained talking for a long time upon the Quai d'Orsay. He told me the circumstances of his life; they were deplorable.

Once more, and at an age when it is impossible to climb the ascent, he had sunk to the lowest depth. The revolution of 1848 had struck him just when he had acquired by his exertions a certain degree of comfort and was able to arrange his life under somewhat favourable conditions.

Patiently and courageously he had set to work again, laid stone to stone, rebuilt the edifice of his fortunes, and just when it was beginning to assume substantial dimensions the revolution of the 4th of September destroyed the shelter he had prepared for his old age. He was sad, but not bitter. Domestic irritations, personal humiliations, and uncongenial companionship, difficulties it is not fitting I should discuss here, added to his unhappiness. Afterwards he again spoke of his pecuniary embarrassments, of the bad luck which seemed to pursue him, and added, "I am a poet, no Government knew or cared for that. Had I not had my weekly *feuilleton* of theatrical criticism to fall back upon how should I have existed?" Every word he uttered was strictly true, and far from being honourable to the successive Governments the rise and fall of which Gautier had witnessed.

Kepler compiled books of astrology for his daily bread, and that he might pursue his astronomical researches. He used to say, "The legitimate daughter is fed by the bastard daughter." Théophile Gautier might have said something of the same kind, only in his case it was dramatic criticism supporting poetry. Unfortunately this dramatic criticism was of no real value, had only a passing interest, and absorbed the time which should have been devoted to other and more serious work. Had he produced five or six thousand more lines of poetry instead of scribbling twelve or fifteen hundred *feuilletons* of unequal merit for the *Presse*, the *Moniteur Universel*, and the *Journal Officiel*, the interests of the drama would not have suffered, and French literature would have benefited.

Napoleon III. was not unmindful of the precarious position in which poets are placed who cannot gain a living by writing poetry, and are, therefore, forced to devote themselves to prose.

He decided to select six poets, and to grant them each a pension of 6,000 francs from his privy purse. Théophile Gautier was one of those chosen. He

was made aware of the fact, and rejoiced to think that henceforth his life would be less oppressed by pecuniary embarrassment, and that he would be able to devote more time to the cultivation of the Muse.

Unluckily the pension list was made out in alphabetical order. The two first poets who were sounded happened to be wealthy or proud men; they refused the benefaction. Their example, it was feared, might prove contagious, the project was abandoned, and Gautier met with another of his many disappointments.

During the last days of the Empire a suitable post had been found for him, which, as he told me, enabled him to live without too much discomfort and sometimes to be ill for a week without feeling that the wolf was at the door.

With very rare exceptions—in our day only two such exceptions (Lamartine and Victor Hugo) can be named,—poets cannot live by their poetry. Either they are reduced to the fabrication of translations and miscellaneous articles, or they are appointed to the management of some public library with a salary of three thousand francs. This is no exaggeration. The week before he died, that is to say when he was universally famous, Alfred de Musset's publisher made him a proposition. His brother writes of it as follows :—"He regretted that he had not accepted the proposal made to him by his editor, who offered him a life annuity of 2,400 francs in exchange for the exclusive and perpetual copyright of all his published works."\* There is no need to enforce the argument further when such a circumstance can be adduced from the life of Alfred de Musset. What Théophile Gautier's fate would have been can be easily conceived had he, as he was often tempted to do, abandoned prose and devoted himself to poetry.

"The things of the soul," says Ernest Renan, "are without price. To the savant who enlightens

\* Paul de Musset, "Biographie d'Alfred de Musset, sa vie et ses œuvres," Paris, 1873, p. 333.

thought, to the preacher who expounds morality, and to the artist who charms life, men will only grant a pittance entirely disproportionate to the benefits received from them." How does it come to pass that a country like France, which has always boasted itself willing to pay the cost of its renown, should not have understood that it is a point of national honour not to drive men capable of producing the highest work to spend their lives in the lowest drudgery? As I have no personal interest in the matter I am able to speak plainly. If each year a dozen poets were to draw pensions, amounting in all to some twelve thousand francs, our national budget would not be too severely taxed, and a useful as well as generous action would have been performed.

It would be necessary, however, to guarantee one point, no easy matter; a poet's merit would have to be judged apart from all political considerations.

If Alfred de Musset, Théophile Gautier, and, after his ruin, Gustave Flaubert had each been substantially pensioned the cause of French literature would have been advanced. I have not generalized here, I have mentioned their names because each of those writers undoubtedly proved himself possessed of gifts which would have done honour to any nation. Let none imagine that had they possessed an income they would have ceased to work. The plum-tree is bound to bear fruit, and production was as much a necessity in their case. The desire to create is an imperious instinct certain brains are unable to resist.

When Gautier returned in conversation with me to the circumstances of his life it was like listening to a *miserere*. He had only two really happy memories which took him back to a time of expansion and of perfect freedom. One of these referred to his journey through Spain in 1840, and the other to his stay in Venice with Louis de Cormanin during the year 1850. With these two exceptions he remembered only times of sadness. Even his moments of folly and of passion, although he would

pretend that he had forced an entrance to Mohammed's paradise, were troubled by passing impressions of bitterness.

In spite of his exceptional strength and the magnitude of his desires Gautier was a dreamer, strayed into the midst of a restless, implacable civilization, which rushed past him and over him, and trod him under foot, while he, unconscious of the fact, made no complaint. It was not that he was misunderstood by it, but that he was altogether outside the society he had been born into, as it were, by accident, therefore a kind of fierce diffidence, which often degenerated into timidity, restrained him from uttering a complaint. Where would have been the use? No one would have heeded him. "Poor Théo!" he sometimes exclaimed, and we, his friends, knew what depths of unspoken suffering were compressed into that cry. He lived in a world of dreams far away, so far away, indeed, that he was aware the fantastic existence he had imagined was not to be realized upon our earth, and therefore made the best of the indifferent circumstances in which he was forced to live.

Théophile Gautier had but few aspirations in the direction of wealth or power. Once I asked him, "What gift would you most have desired?" "Beauty," he replied. It was a strange answer, for he was very handsome, although rather inclined to be stout, even in youth. As he grew old his bulk increased, and he became heavy and shapeless. His many cares weighed him down, and wrote cruel lines upon his face. That fear of death he never strove to conceal was mainly due to his horror of everything connected with human dissolution. Never would he enter the Morgue. The sight of a sick person offended his sense of beauty, grey hairs were a premonition of decay, and consequently unpleasant; everything which could possibly remind him that dust returns to dust caused him a disagreeable impression.

Théophile Gautier never recovered from the

effects of the war, the revolution of the 4th September, and the commune. From that time he gradually sank into the grave, failed in health, was surrounded by shadows, became gloomy, seldom disposed to talk, and full of regrets. The two words "Delenda Spes" ended a note he wrote me five or six months before his death to charge me with a confidential mission. His griefs, his anxieties about the morrow, the absence of all pause in his life of toil harassed him and caused him more distress than it suited him to reveal, restrained as he was by the self-enforced serenity he tried to maintain. He became anæmic and weak, there was every indication of his having had a seizure of some kind in his sleep; he was not conscious of it himself, but it had left too evident traces. Later on he was partially paralyzed. He could not recall certain words, although he tried to do so. His breathing became oppressed, there was too much fat about the heart, which refused to do its work; renal mischief, that disease of dying men, set in, and on the 23rd October, 1872, poor Théo fell asleep for the last time.

I was travelling far from France when he died. I bought a foreign newspaper at a railway station, and from its pages I learnt the death of the poet I had loved, and with whom I had formerly lived in terms of the closest intimacy. My grief was the more poignant because the news was unexpected; Gautier's colossal strength made it seem improbable that he would succumb so quickly. A hundred memories crowded in upon me. I seemed to see the little private house in the Rue Lord-Byron, where I had met him for the first time; his rooms in the Rue Rougemont, where the staff of the Garde Nationale had ordered his arrest; and the department in the Rue Grande-Batelière, where the Hungarian violinists played heroic marches. Then I thought of the house at Neuilly, of that last resting-place, where he was to die, and for which the Communists had had no little respect. I

remembered our walks at Geneva, when we gazed at the blue waters of the lake, our long conversations upon the Boulevards on our way back from the theatre, our plans and projects, our common friendships, and our æsthetic discussions. How hard I thought it not to be able to turn and look back at the past without seeing a crowd of memorial crosses which mark the resting-place of those who journeyed beside one!

It is sad, I reflected, to grow old amid regrets, and those who are delivered from the burden of life should not excite our pity.

This deliverance, which removes man from earth and yet leaves him in the heart of his friends, is constantly going on. There he finds his true sepulchre, and after a time those who survive become, so to speak, a receptacle for the dead, and hold converse with them. They crowd in upon us, but we have room for them all. Memory is hospitable, and turns no one away from its door.

There is no common grave, but a separate tomb for each. The beloved dead often arise, wave their fluttering shrouds, and speak with us once more. Who is this who beckons me now? Poor boy! Is it you? Do you fear, Herni-Charles Read, son of my old friend, that you will be forgotten, you who fled from us on the wings of your eighteenth summer? Do you remember the three weeks you spent with us in the country; your astonished looks and your gay laughter at the stories I used to tell you? You were so young, but already full of thought, and gazed with admiration at the green trees upon the mountain slopes. Everything you saw charmed you, and you turned to life and its aspirations with tempered enthusiasm! Already death's reticent finger seemed laid upon your lip.

If your pallor and your dilated eyes awakened my fears every gloomy foreboding disappeared when I noted your delight in life.

How gentle you were, and how genuine was the simplicity of your character! Full of the desire to

know you longed to find a poetic form for every idea, but dared not show your verses because you distrusted yourself, and you distrusted yourself because you had real merit.

Do you remember that I took you out to shoot, and that you made friends with Galba and Falco? Do you recollect that I showed you how to fire your first shot, and that you did not shoot me, which astonished us both? You ran about in the long grass with the activity of your young years, and when the sun sank below the horizon, and the smoke from cottage chimneys began to ascend, you repeated to me a passage from Virgil. Was it not then, when the memories awakened by immortal verse thrilled you like the perfume of freshly-gathered flowers, that you quoted "*fata aspera rumpas*?"

You thought of your own fate at that moment. You came among us and you departed. You only lingered here to write a few verses like those birds of passage we hear early on some May morning, who stir our heart by their song, and then fly away never to return.

When your bright spirit took flight for the heights, and your home was left for ever desolate, those who adored your memory collected the little possessions your hands had touched to preserve them as relics. Then they found the papers you hid away so carefully, and they realized that their brother and son was a poet. I wonder if you knew it? Did you know, dear lad, that among those posthumous verses there are some exquisite poems? One of them I cannot refrain from quoting; it expresses with such power the confused ideas which torment the young:—

" Je crois que Dieu quand je suis né,  
Pour moi n'a pas fait de dépense,  
Et que le cœur qu'il m'a donné  
Était bien vieux dès mon enfance.

" Par économie ill logea  
Dans ma juvénile poitrine,  
Un cœur ayant servi déjà,  
Un cœur flétri, tout en ruine.



" Il a subi mille combats,  
 Il est couvert de meurtrissures,  
 Et cependant je ne sais pas  
 D'où lui viennent tant de blessures.

" Il a les souvenirs lointains  
 De cent passions que j'ignore  
 Flammes mortes, rêves éteints,  
 Soleils disparus dès l'aurore.

" Il brûle de feux dévorants  
 Pour de superbes inconnues,  
 Et sent des parfums délirants  
 D'amours que je n'ai jamais eues !

" O le plus terrible tourment,  
 Mal sans pareil, douleur suprême !  
 Sort sinistre ! Aimer follement,  
 Et ne pas savoir ce qu'on aime.\*

The boy who wrote these verses at the age of seventeen was a poet.

"Nature," says Ernest Renan, "is absolutely insensible, supremely immoral." Yes ! And never does this immorality seem more heinous than when we see an exceptionally gifted being just turning to life fade and die before us. We are bewildered and indignant, for we realize that a mere physical failure may destroy the noblest faculties and shatter the fairest hopes, hopes which were about to blossom into fulfilment. The art of letters may mourn the loss of Charles Read; he would have joined its ranks and done honour to the cause.

I had sent the little posthumous volume to Flaubert. In his reply he wrote, "If the recruits are to be taken first, the ranks will soon be empty, for the veterans grow old, and must begin to shoulder their baggage."

He little guessed how true his words were, and that his own hour was about to arrive. For him, as for so many others, life had been overshadowed by the war. He was devoured by *ennui*; every day work became a greater difficulty. Nothing now satisfied him; the task of constant correction and

\* Henri-Charles Read, "Poésies Posthumes," 1874-1876. Paris : A. Lemerre, 1879.

erasure tired him out. He told me that this was the case, and I knew that he spoke the truth.

In September, 1871, he wrote me as follows:—  
“The work I am now engaged upon, besides being very difficult in itself, gives me such a sense of satiety that sobs often rise in my throat, not to speak of the headaches I am never free from. I am afraid I may become hypochondriacal. I only leave my study to take my meals with my mother, who hears nothing now, and takes no interest except in my health. That is the pleasing existence I have to lead.”

This was, indeed, a trying state of things, but his mode of life made it still more painful. He lived in complete seclusion, and the only exercise he took consisted in the change from his study to the dining-room.

An immense fire burnt in his study directly the temperature lowered. He wore wide trousers, fastened at the waist with a narrow silken cord, and a dressing-gown always open at the throat. He hung over the table, reviled rebellious substantives, verbal repetitions, and inharmonious phrases. Then he would throw down his pen in a rage, stretch himself out upon his divan, sleep for half-an-hour, get up, smoke for five minutes, return to the interrupted sentence, mechanically pull at his long moustache, and fall into despair over an art he tried to bring to the height of perfection. The whole day, the evening, and a portion of the night were spent thus in a state of perpetual irritation. At about three or four in the morning he would open his window, watch the Seine flow by, draw in a breath of air, and then go to bed, where he would fall into a troubled and unrestful sleep. In his dreams he repeated sentences in a loud voice, and then awoke with palpitations of the heart. The next day he went through the same process, and exhausted himself more and more.

It needed all his strength to bear up against such unremitting toil. We led this kind of life when we were young, and met together at Croisset and

Rouen; he continued to lead it until the end of his life, whereas I abandoned it long ago. At night work seems to carry us away with feverish force. The brain needs to be penetrated by the purifying light of day.

Flaubert had complained of his mother's infirmities, but soon he was to regret that his hand could no longer relieve them.

"My mother," he wrote me on the 6th April, 1872, "is just dead. Since last Monday I have not closed my eyes, and am quite worn out with fatigue. How much I have thought of you this week and of all the past! Dear Maxime, dear old comrade, I embrace you."

Gustave adored his mother, scarcely ever left her, lived with her and for her. After his father's death this care had seemed to him a duty, later it became necessary to him. When away from her he felt nervous and almost unhappy. The full extent of the sacrifices he made for her sake are only known to me, also that he never regretted them. This masterful, imperious giant, rebellious under the slightest contradiction, was the most gentle, respectful, and attentive son a mother ever dreamt of. Occasionally he uttered a protest against that which in our private talks he called his servitude. But when his servitude was no longer present he missed it and could not console himself for its loss. He wrote to one of our friends, "My life is completely upset; I must try to remake it, and that is hard at the age of fifty."

In general his attachment to his family was exceedingly strong, and, indeed, it brought about his ruin.

After the death of his mother Flaubert's life seemed to drift. It had centred round her, and now she was gone. He lived in greater, or, as he himself said, more bitter solitude. Except for two or three months spent in Paris, during which time he constantly bemoaned himself for having to pay and to receive visits, he seldom left Croisset.

When in Paris he would come to me to pour out his grievances against the people who told him idle stories and gossip; they irritated him the more because he listened to them in silence. He would hasten back to the repose of country life. There he was certain to be alone with his dreams and with *ennui*.

"Oh! my poor dear friend," he wrote me, "if you only knew how much I think of the past in my solitude, and therefore of you. I am immersed in a sea of memories; they are drowning me."

In a letter to one of his lady friends he says—"My life is a long platitude. I see no one, and that suits me, for I have become thoroughly unsociable. I talk to my dog, and go every day to draw a draught of water from the river. Those are my distractions."

He had published his third version of the "*Tentation de Saint Antoine*." It was a lengthy dialogue, written in an elevated and learned style. "The action of the story," he declared, "was so rapid that it produced the effect upon the mind of a vision."

Ever since his twentieth year he had been attracted by the drama. He longed to speak directly to the crowd through the intervention of actors, to observe an audience swayed by the emotions he had awakened. Therefore, late in life he wrote "*Le Candidat*," a play of modern, or rather of electoral manners, with a series of comic situations evolved out of analogous and yet contradictory circumstances.

I was present at the Vaudeville Theatre during the first representation. I was anxious, for I had attended the dress rehearsal, and felt far from confident. The first act was well received. The author's name was known to all, and his great abilities, his character, and his kindly nature disposed the public in his favour. During the second act alternations of feeling were discernible in the audience, and the third act collapsed altogether.

Flaubert had placed a psychological study,

full of detail and shades of feeling, upon the stage, where even the strongest scenes have to be made still stronger if they are to produce an effect. The piece was a complete failure.

I was afraid this experience would increase the bitterness which sometimes almost overwhelmed Flaubert. But I was mistaken. He bore his defeat bravely, and dined at my house on the night of the second representation. His gaiety was a little forced, but well-sustained, and when to soften the blow people assured him that "the piece would be revived later on, and yet prove a success," he replied, "This evening the piece was outrageously hissed. I shall take it off the boards to-morrow, and it will not be placarded any more."

He adhered to his decision, and next day "*Le Candidat*" was removed from the repertory of the theatre.\*

This comedy, written with what was for him extraordinary rapidity—it was produced in six weeks—had served as a kind of distraction from another work he had in hand, and which he now resumed with ardour.

He was engaged in carrying out one of the projects of his youth. He had returned to the story of those two clerks he used to tell me about in 1843. I again give a brief summary of the plot; two copying clerks inherit a small fortune, realize their dream, and live together in the country. They soon weary of their idle life and set to work to copy everything they can lay their hands on by way of distraction.

It would have made a plot for a short story, but during Flaubert's prolonged meditations the subject had developed; each day he added some fresh episode to the original motive, out of all proportion to the whole. His idea was to write a book which would be a sort of encyclopædia of human stupidity.

\* "*Le Candidat*," comédie en four actes représentée sur le théâtre du Vaudeville, les 11, 12, 13, et 14 Mars, 1874. Paris, Ed. Charpentier, 1874.

"I do not clearly understand," I said to him, "what you mean to do," and he replied —

"I want to produce such an impression of utter weariness and *ennui* that my readers will imagine the book could only have been written by a *cretin*."

It was a strange ambition, but he was quite sincere. He had constituted himself the historian of these two idiots, and he set to work, but the endeavour to write their adventures bored him to such an extent that he was obliged to abandon the undertaking.

Like a man who takes a bath after he has been rolled in the dust, Flaubert again immersed himself in the elevated themes which best suited his temperament, and wrote, "*Hérodiad*" and "*Saint Julien l'Hospitalier*." Later he produced "*Un Cœur Simple*," in which story he displays some of the analytic power that had ensured the success of "*Madame Bovary*."

These three stories, published in one volume and called "*Les Trois Contes*," show him at his best. He has thrown the reins to his genius, develops his ideas in his own way, and gives free utterance to what he called familiarly "his howls" (*gueulades*). These three stories had haunted his brain for some time. "*Saint Julien l'Hospitalier*" was inspired by the painted window of a Norman Church, "*Hérodiad*" by the side doors of the Cathedral at Rouen, and "*Le Cœur Simple*" is founded upon a story he had heard at Honfleur.

A mental peculiarity which showed itself in Flaubert when this book appeared caused me some anxiety, for it was an indication of a singular aberration of mind. The volume appeared in the month of April, 1877, and promised to be a brilliant success, when the political incident of the 16th May occurred and engrossed the public attention. France and its destinies seemed more important than three novelettes. Flaubert was indignant. He wrote to me as follows:—

"The war of 1870 killed '*l'Education Senti-*

mentale,' and now a civil *coup d'état* has paralyzed the 'Trois Contes.' They carry their hatred of literature rather far certainly."

He did not remain permanently imbued with this idea, but it traversed his brain, and he believed temporarily that the political world wished to suppress every manifestation of literary power, even when it took the form of legends connected with two saints and the story of a servant maid. If a political event in any way prejudiced the interests of a play or a novel his anger was thoroughly genuine.

"What next," he would say, "will they invent for our annoyance? They will never be happy until authors and playwrights, books and theatres have all been swept away."

Such remarks, uttered in perfect good faith, prove how entirely he was possessed by literature; he could not perceive or admit anything outside his art.

Refreshed by this incidental production, and feeling himself relieved of his superabundant graces of style, he again began to write the story of his two *bons hommes* (worthy men), as he called them. The work did not make much progress. His object was to ridicule not only the characters in the story, but also the knowledge they endeavoured to acquire. Now Flaubert had only the most imperfect ideas with respect to this kind of knowledge himself, so he was forced to study it, if in a rather summary fashion, in order that he might write about it. He began to read a number of works on agriculture, botany, geology, political economy, magnetism, and on the science of education.

He read with feverish haste, and made a collection of opinions and even sentences which he considered peculiarly stupid. To me he wrote:—"Send me everything you have in your library about primary education. Try and discover for me somewhere a foolish old book on physiology. Where should I be able to find the 'Naturaliste

du Premier Age?' Have you Baron Dupotet's book, and some other work on spiritualism? I remember once seeing a small volume at your house entitled 'La fin du monde par la Science,' please send it to me. In a word put all the imbecile productions you have into a cab with your servant, and send them to me. Do not forget Doctor Sacombe's 'Luciniade,' over which we used to laugh so much with poor Bouilhet."

I sent him twenty or thirty volumes at a time. In a week he had taken all the notes he required for the absurd experiments his Bouvard and Pécuchet were to attempt.

This novel absorbed him completely; he used to say "This will be the book of revenge." Revenge for what? I could not conjecture, and his explanations were extremely confused. I knew Flaubert's life as I know my own, and I could not remember a fact or an incident in it he had cause to avenge.

He became famous in a day, as was only just; he was the spoilt child of more than one private circle; he had devoted men friends, and some enviable friendships with women.

Again I repeat, vengeance for what? But I cannot find the answer. Vengeance upon human nature's blindness and stupidity, perhaps, which amazed him, and made him roar with laughter when it did not drive him into a furious rage. He did not live long enough to finish this book, which was published in one volume, with the title "Bouvard et Pécuchet." Flaubert had intended that there should be two volumes. He had actually begun the second volume, for he wrote to me in March, 1878:—"I have embarked upon my eighth chapter, after that there are two more chapters, and then the second volume, which is already *well advanced*." Probably this was what he called "the book of revenge."

His two clerks, when they had decided to take to copying once more, wished to do so intelligently, on their own account, and not like the machines they



had formerly been. They made a collection of great thoughts, read all the latest books, works of science, of poetry, of the imagination, of history, and copied out extracts from them. Of course, owing to their natural stupidity, they gathered together the greatest imaginable number of errors and absurdities.

If in the course of his reading or in thinking over the past Flaubert came across a quaint couplet, an ill-constructed sentence, a foolish fancy, or any kind of blunder, he would make a note of it, and say, "That will do for my two *bons hommes*."

The second volume was to have been entirely composed of quotations borrowed from commonplace books and from the stereotyped phrases he had met with in the literature of the day. He had spared no one. The greatest names would have figured in this pantheon of copybook morality. His friends were not to be exempted either.

"I have collected," he informed me, "at least fifteen sentences of yours which are delightfully foolish." At any rate the number was not large. If the manuscript of this second volume was found—I mean the volume which contained the justification of the first—it was never published. I think his executors acted wisely.

A painful episode which occurred while he was writing "*Bouvard et Pécuchet*" overshadowed the last years of his life, and rendered them well-nigh insupportable. His mental and moral condition is revealed in a portion of a letter he wrote on the 15th August, 1874:—"The sheath must have been strong or the blade would have worn through it. How is it that, in the last two years especially, I have not died of grief and anger? That I should not have done so passes my comprehension. Well, I am as sturdy as an oak and can work like an ox!"

At her death his mother had left him not, indeed, a fortune, but an income sufficient to secure him from all anxiety in the future. It had also been

stipulated that he should be allowed to inhabit the Croisset house for the remainder of his life, although the property was left to another heir. He was therefore suitably provided for, and felt satisfied with his material prospects.

With his method of production, which resulted in his spending four or five years over a single volume, he was aware that he could never have lived by his writings. That fact was not enough to keep him from ruining himself with a reckless generosity which no advice or entreaty, no intervention even, could arrest. After all, this inveterate enemy of the *bourgeois*, he who had spent most of his life in laughing at other men's prejudices, had all the *bourgeois* virtues, and in compliance with their behest he alienated the provision he had made for his old age.

His circumstances were straitened. He said to me, "I often hesitate before hiring a carriage." Already his means were limited, and in the near future poverty stared him in the face. He was pre-occupied, and could not succeed in hiding his anxiety of mind. His friends were not long in discovering the cause, which, indeed, was known to every inhabitant of Rouen. An effort was then made to obtain for him a post in some museum or public library. He had friends among the deputies, who were devoted to him. At this moment Silvestre de Sacy, who was curator of the Mazarine Library, died. The vacancy had occurred, and his friends wished that Flaubert should fill it. He was made aware of the steps that were being taken in his behalf; he did nothing either to further or to oppose them, and remained neutral.

Vested interests stood in his way, the post of curator was already assigned to another; he was offered that of librarian, and refused it. The inward struggle he underwent was severe—I note its traces in a correspondence he exchanged with one of those most interested in this question.

On the 1st March, 1879, he wrote —

"I do not care to be the recipient of charity, especially of charity which I have not deserved. It is the duty, not of the Government, but of those"—he mentions them by name—"who have ruined me to support me. Yes! I am stupid, but not interesting. I am so thoroughly demoralized that I only long for one thing, namely, Asiatic cholera. Ah! if it would only come and carry me off!"

Three months later he wrote to another person—

"It is over, I have yielded. My ungovernable pride has given way at last. I am on the eve of starvation, or of something very near it. Therefore I accept the place in question, which means 3,000 francs a year, with the promise that I am not to be expected to give my services, as an enforced residence in Paris would only impoverish me still more."

He was therefore given a supernumerary's post at the Mazarine Library, where he never showed himself. In this instance M. Jules Ferry, Minister of Public Instruction, in a delicate manner came to the assistance of an author who had produced various *chefs-d'œuvre*, did himself the greatest honour, and earned the gratitude of literary men, who all admired the step he had taken.

Flaubert was not destined long to enjoy the humble sinecure which had been conferred upon him.

He had suffered from too many moral shocks, had been tortured by too many anxieties. Age was beginning to dull his powers; he had now reached his fifty-eighth year. In vain he worked with redoubled ardour, he could not escape from himself, and *ennui* overpowered him. He wearied of his lonely life—formerly he had dreaded callers, now he encouraged their visits, and his Rouen friends often took the way to Croisset.

A seemingly trifling incident, connected with a cigar, lighted up certain dark places he had hitherto refused to penetrate. He wrote a long letter, which resembles an indictment, and poured into it all the

bitterness of his soul.\* The mental tortures he had endured brought on his youthful infirmity with renewed violence. The attacks had become more frequent, and they now occurred at an age when they are apt to be followed by congestion of important organs. He toiled on, however; this brave worker was to handle the tool he loved to the last. His book was not finished, but "he could see daylight," as he expressed it, which meant that he had thought out the last pages, and had only to commit them to paper.

He was preparing to spend two months in Paris, and looked forward to the long visits he would make to the Bibliothèque Nationale, where he could find Chéron, since dead, the most amiable and learned of bibliophiles. Everything was packed; he had even collected, ready for the journey, the manuscript of "Bouvard et Pécuchet" and the notes necessary for the completion of the last chapter.

In the morning of Saturday, the 8th of May, 1880, he had one of his nervous seizures, and tried to subdue it by inhaling ether. When he recovered consciousness he had the yellow, or, as he called it, the golden vision. The blood rushed to his head. He managed to grope his way to the divan and lay down upon his back. Stertorous sounds came from his chest. He breathed heavily and tried to speak.

Amid the shadows closing in upon him, he doubtless understood that his last hour was struck. Twice he called his friend and doctor, "Hallot! Hallot!" A convulsion distorted his mouth, he turned away his head and died.

When the papers announced, by telegraphic despatch, with the usual harsh brevity, that Gustave Flaubert, author of the "Trois Contes," of "Salambô," and "Madame Bovary," had been suddenly struck down, the whole world of letters was troubled, and uttered a cry of grief. He had

\* This letter, which is a statement supported by proofs, is only to be made public under certain circumstances determined by Flaubert himself.

been ceaselessly criticized and discussed during his lifetime; even the judicial advocates of the Empire had attacked him in their choicest rhetoric, and his fame had astounded the incompetent. But now he had suddenly become a great man. Not a protest was heard, only universal agreement.

At last his right to be placed in the first rank among writers was recognized; he was pronounced an incomparable stylist, the leader of a school; I had known it all for thirty years. By his interpretation of human feeling, he struck a new chord which vibrates with extraordinary power. His genius was guided by the most perfect artistic conscientiousness. As he was only a man he may sometimes have been mistaken, but I am prepared to affirm that he never rested satisfied with a sentence until he had used his best endeavours to make it as perfect as possible. The older he grew the more rigorous was the standard he applied to himself, the less easy to satisfy did he become. Notwithstanding his pride, his well-founded pride, in his work, there were moments when he even doubted his own powers. Never was writer more faithful and enthusiastic or more respectful where his art was concerned. He left nothing to chance or to the inspiration of the moment. His productions are the result of enormous industry. I have seldom known a more honourable career, and he is one of the most serious writers whose talent adorns French literature.

In spite of his diatribes and his flouts at human existence, he loved life. I thank God that he was spared a long agony at its close. He now rests beside his father, mother, and sister, and not far from Louis Bouilhet, whom he loved so well.\*

As an artist, Flaubert was faultless, if not as a man. And who is without failings? His were

\* Shortly after Flaubert's death, the house at Croisset was sold for 180,000 francs. Upon the spot where he once lived a factory for extracting alcohol from damaged wheat has been established. Only a tulip-tree now remains to remind us of the past.

surface faults and did not mar the goodness of his nature. They were the result of a spirit of exuberance, combined with great concentration of will, and of an exceptional temperament, which made bodily effort a painful task. But the faults to which I allude were mainly due to his nervous malady. Without taking that factor into account, his character, his habits, and his genius would be incomprehensible. He was well aware that such was the case, and he often said, "I am the victim of physiological facts." Had it been his duty to speak of himself he would not have kept it secret. Those who seek to deify the dead do them no honour and show very little respect for their memory when they endeavour to conceal the truth.

Gustave's nervous infirmity—an infirmity he suffered from all his life and which was the cause of his death—was no disgrace to him. It was a pathological accident, like a cancer or St. Vitus's dance. He whom it afflicted had no responsibility in the matter.

The difficulties of Flaubert's existence were increased immeasurably by this illness. He struggled against them; devotion to his art and his anxiety to act for the best enabled him to conquer them. His life, and to his eternal honour let it be remembered, was a perpetual combat. His works are the best proof of the victory he gained over himself. To reveal his bodily weakness, the conquest of mind over matter, and bring it into the light of day, can only raise him higher in public estimation. It was surely a proof of rare strength of mind and of exceptional ability that, weighted as he was, he became so great a writer. Had he been a healthy man he would seem less remarkable; afflicted as he was, his case is phenomenal. I love his memory too well to be guilty of the silly sentiment which could alone hinder me from describing him as he was. A lame man who wins the prize in a race must have strained every nerve in the effort.

I was ill when Flaubert died, and, naturally, the grief I suffered did not hasten my recovery. I was unable to follow his remains to their last resting-place. It is not a subject for regret with me. Had I done so, the burden of memory, the thought of our young days, of the life we led together, of our illusions, our hopes, and our unfailing affection might have overpowered me. I know not if I could have reached the goal.

\* \* \* \* \*

The task is finished ; the last tomb is closed. Old grave-digger, you may lay down your spade.

\* \* \* \* \*

Every book should have a few concluding remarks. Those I mean to add at the end of these sad pages will be very brief. Villemain is credited with having said : "The pursuit of letters leads to everything if only we forsake it." I should prefer to say : "The pursuit of letters consoles us for everything if we give ourselves to it irrevocably, respect it absolutely, and follow it loyally." Literature is a companion in the brightest days and a friend in the darkest. He who loves it has a defence against the assault of external things and dwells in a charmed circle, from which no true delight is banished, although vulgar satisfactions are excluded. For my own part, I do not know a nobler function than that of the independent and disinterested literary man. With the love of truth and of work he should combine a little modesty, should have studied the story of the nations, and have learnt that no subsequent defeat can efface the glory of the past, nor any present triumph ensure victory in the future. Indifferent to the passing phases of contemporary politics, he should be mindful only of justice and freedom, endeavour to do his best and know no other ambition.

Then, notwithstanding the disappointments of

personal life and the bitterness of our common griefs, if he can understand the greatness of the age, if beyond the grave he can see the eternal light, if he possesses such friends as those I have lost and those I see around me, his lot has been a happy one ; he should render thanks to Fate.





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